



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

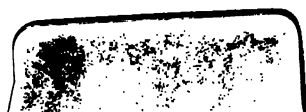
### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

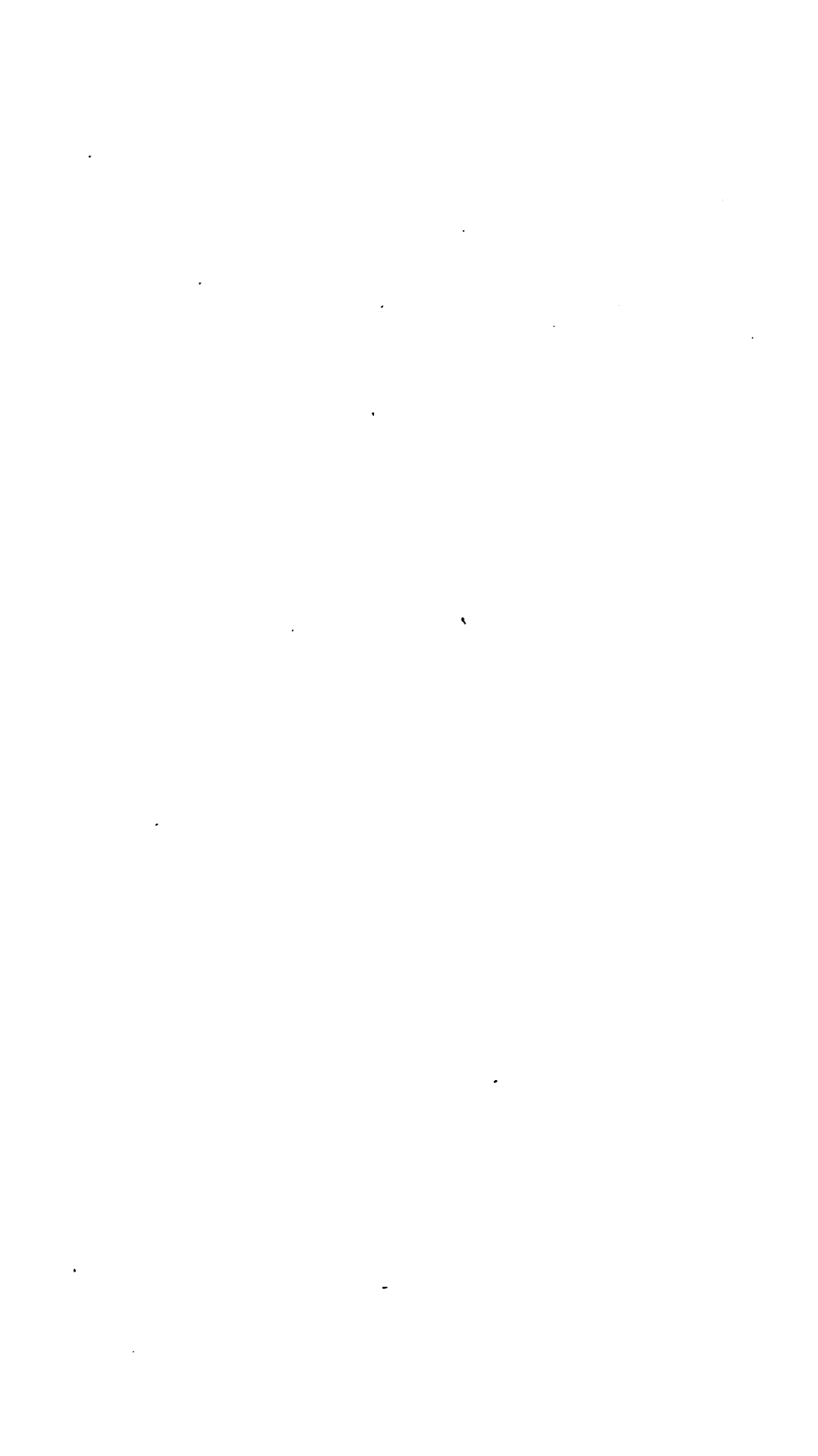


39.

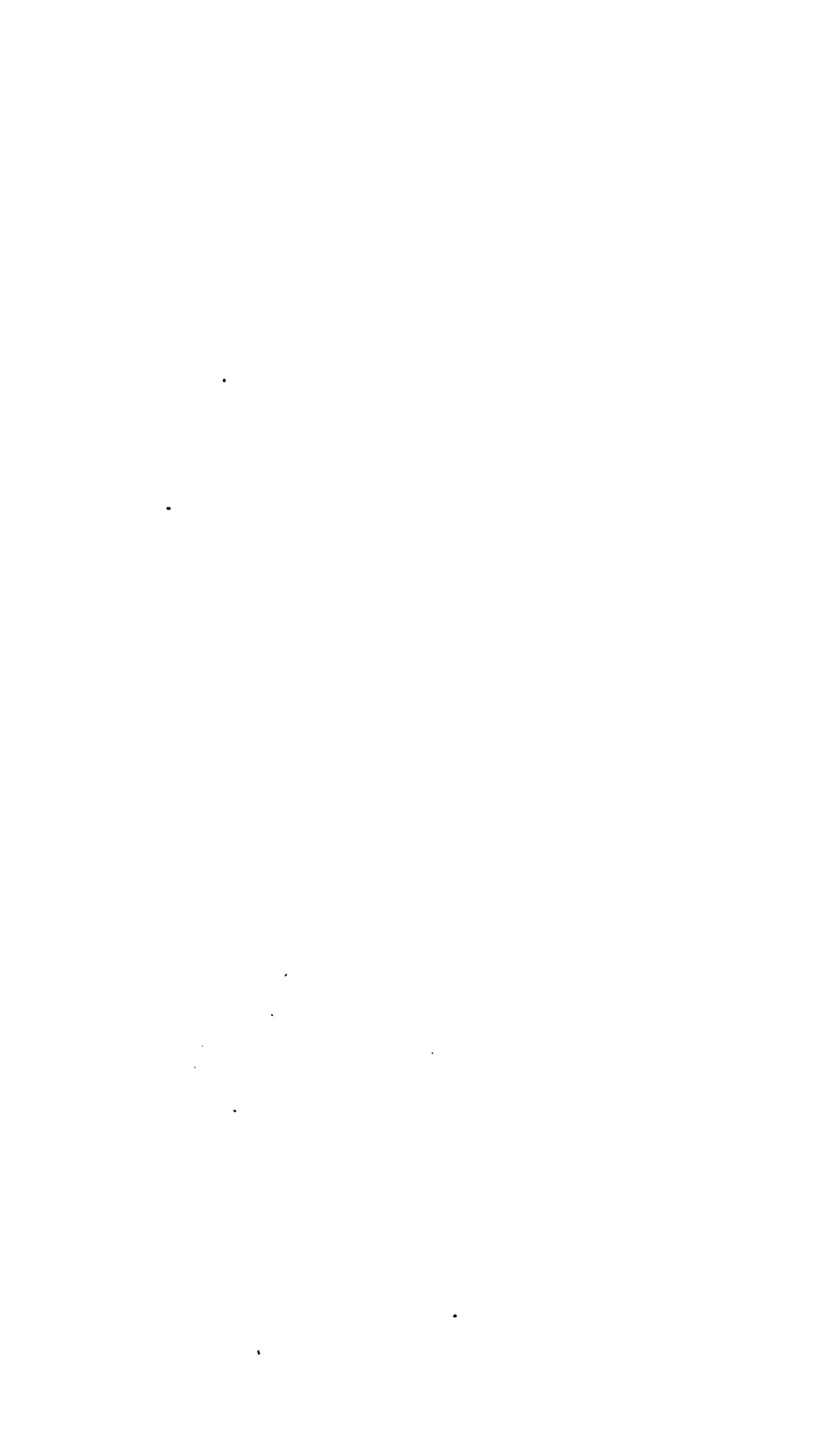
522.







THE PENITENT.



THE PENITENT  
A  
DOMESTIC STORY  
OF THE  
NINETEENTH CENTURY

" Heaven, who knows our weak, imperfect natures,  
How blind with passion, and how prone to evil,  
Makes not too strict inquiry for offences,  
But is aton'd by penitence and prayer."

Rowe.



LONDON  
SAUNDERS AND OTLEY, CONDUIT STREET.  
1839.

522.



**LONDON:**  
**BLATCH AND LAMPERT, PRINTERS, GROVE PLACE, BROMPTON.**

# THE PENITENT.

---

## CHAPTER I.

“ — Thou, O Hope, with eyes so fair,  
What was thy delighted measure?  
Still it whispered promis'd pleasure,  
And bade the lovely scenes at distance Hail.”

COLLINS.

I WAS born in the County of Dorset, in the neighbourhood of Melcomb Regis, and was an only child. My father had been a merchant of some eminence in the metropolis, and had accumulated wealth; but, like too many of his fellow-men, not satisfied with what he possessed, and anxious to add to his store, entered deeply into speculations, which proved unsuccessful;

and in addition to these, the unexpected failure of a West India house, whose liabilities were of immense amount, and who were largely indebted to him, caused his affairs to become embarrassed. Influenced by the advice of his friends, and in accordance with his own wishes, he determined to wind up the concern, and on the wreck of his fortune to seek for happiness in the retirement of a country life. In this, like thousands before him, he was disappointed: he had been accustomed for too many years to employment, in which all the faculties of his mind had been occupied, to find a life of tranquillity congenial to him: he soon became listless and indifferent, and the transition is easy from indifference to discontent. Soon after quitting London, he was so fortunate as to gain the heart and hand of a virtuous woman, whose price, in the language of the wisest of men, is "far above rubies;" and shortly afterwards his pecuniary circumstances were improved by an unexpected accession of property in consequence of the sudden death of

a cousin. Notwithstanding these advantages, however, my father was become querulous and repining, tormenting himself and others with his vain regrets and imaginary anxieties ; and so much are we creatures of habit, that I believe, on my conscience, he at last experienced a degree of actual pleasure in giving utterance to his complaints. It was something to do, an occupation, only varied by occasional attacks of the gout, to which he was subject ; and which, strange as it may seem, always had a beneficial influence upon his temper, which became less peevish and complaining during their continuance. So true is the observation of a profound writer, “ that a moderate pain, upon which the attention may fasten and spend itself, is to many a refreshment, as a fit of the gout will sometimes cure the spleen.”

These reiterated complaints, and the general tone of his conversation, must have been to my mother extremely wearying and distressing ; but her countenance did not betray her feelings, and

she exerted herself with the same unvarying kindness to soothe his fretfulness, and to impart to him some of that cheerfulness of which she possessed so large a portion. Indeed, she fulfilled her connubial duties in the most exemplary manner; for myself, I can truly say, whatever good or holy feeling remains with me, after an acquaintance with dissipation and crime, was implanted by her precepts, or rather by her example; which even now, after the lapse of years, is before me. My boyhood passed without any incident worth relating, except the death of my father, which occurred when I was twelve years old. At school I rather distinguished myself by my proficiency in classical attainments; and although my disposition wore an external covering of reserve and seriousness, I possessed warm and impetuous feelings, a great share of susceptibility, and an ardent imagination, to which I too often surrendered my better judgment, while dreaming of scenes of vain and ideal felicity. Among my chosen associates

there was but one whose name I need mention, and that only on account of circumstances which gave a colour to the whole of my after life, and which had their origin in my acquaintance with his family. Charles Wilson was my senior by two years, indolent and inattentive to study, but active and earnest in sports and amusement, the ringleader in mischief and frolic, to which the exuberance of his spirits always prompted him. Who could look into his handsome face, radiant with cheerfulness, or hear his musical laugh, as he started some new amusement, and refrain from loving him? In fact, he was a favourite with us all; and although my habits were studious, and my disposition was reserved, yet I soon became warmly attached to him. Mr. Wilson had been dead some years; his widow resided a short distance from my father, and had two children, Charles, and his sister Margaret, who was about a year younger than he. It is not in my power to give any description at all adequate to the reality of Margaret's beauty,

which, to my eyes, was faultless. With a fair skin and Grecian features, she had the most beautiful eyes upon which I have ever gazed : they were black, and intensely expressive, one moment sparkling with gaiety, the next melting with softness ; while her voice was so exquisitely musical, that even in conversation it made my soul thrill within me ; and I felt, boy as I was, that I could fall on my knees and worship. Mrs. Wilson was an uneducated woman, but she possessed a great share of good sense and natural shrewdness of understanding, and with the advantage of education, she would have been a very superior woman ; as it was, she was a kind and good mother, although worldly, and anxious, as was only natural, to see her children well established in the world. Mr. Wilson, whom I never saw, had been described to me as a man of indolent and easy disposition, who in almost all his transactions seemed to have adopted for his motto a saying, attributed to the most able diplomatist and supple courtier

of modern times, "Never to do to-day what can be deferred till to-morrow." However, after the birth of Charles, urged by his wife's incessant importunity, he had made a will, by which he left his entire property to Mrs. Wilson, and at her decease, to Charles. When Margaret was born, it became necessary to make some alteration in the will; but with that culpable procrastination which was so marked a feature in his character, he deferred making it, till, suddenly struck with apoplexy, he died in the very prime of manhood, and Margaret was left without any provision having been made for her. As Charles and I were schoolfellows for some years, it may be inferred that I was a frequent visitor at his mother's, often self-invited; indeed I never was in want of a pretext for calling, so that I had constant opportunities of being in company with Margaret. Ah! those were happy, fleeting hours; then our happiness was unalloyed by regret for the past, and unmingled with apprehensions for the future. •



- There was no class of men which ranked so high in my father's estimation, as those who live by commerce ; the character of a British merchant was the subject of panegyric, whenever he could spare time (which was not often) from the enumeration of his own grievances ; on commerce depended our existence as a nation ; and in proportion to the encouragement or depression of the commercial interest would the resources, and honour of the country be increased or diminished. With these predilections, which he continued to entertain in spite of the losses he had incurred, it was natural that he should wish me to become a member of the mercantile world ; and, accordingly, my education had always been conducted with reference to that intention ; and it was only in consequence of my
- attachment to classical learning, that I had been allowed to devote so much time to that branch of study. I was now sixteen, and was to take my station in the counting-house of an old friend of my father, of the name of Hunter, a wealthy

merchant in the metropolis, who had kindly offered to initiate me in the profession, with the prospect, after a few years, of becoming a junior partner in the concern. I need not say that I felt most reluctant to leave home. I was blessed with one of the best of mothers, to whom I was tenderly attached; and in our pilgrimage on earth, what friend do we meet with so disinterested as a mother? I had two or three chosen companions, who shared my studies or amusements—and there was the beautiful Margaret. It was, however, necessary that I should leave them; and after much good advice from my mother, and a friendly farewell from Margaret and her mother, I departed, accompanied for a few miles on my route by Charles.

On my arrival in Broad Street I met with a cordial reception from Mr. Hunter, whom I had seen before; and immediately entered upon the duties of my situation, so entirely new to me. Notwithstanding I was studious and sedentary, found the confinement to the desk sufficiently

irksome; but after some time I became reconciled to it, as well as to the details of business, which had at first appeared to me dry and uninteresting in the extreme.

## CHAPTER II.

“ Why are friends ravish'd from us ? 'Tis to bind,  
By soft affection's ties, on human hearts,  
The thought of death.”

YOUNG.

“ Or pining love shall waste their youth ;  
Or jealousy, with rankling tooth,  
That inly knaws the secret heart.”

GRAY.

TIME rolled on, its progress enlivened, if not accelerated, by frequent visits to my mother and Margaret, who became more beautiful every day, and of whom each succeeding interview heightened my admiration. We read, we walked, we sang together ; and although love was never the theme of our conversation, it was the con-

stant subject of my day-dreams ; and imagination fondly looked forward to the time when my brilliant anticipations of happiness should be realised ; while, as Mrs. Wilson always received me with cordiality, and tacitly gave every encouragement to my intimacy with Margaret, I never for one moment doubted her approbation of our union ; and although Margaret was universally admired, yet as no one paid her marked or serious attention,—and she, moreover, did not possess what, in this calculating world, is looked upon as the grand matrimonial attraction—money, I never felt more than momentary uneasiness or apprehension of losing her.

I was nearly nineteen when I received a letter, informing me that my mother, whose health had been for some time in a very precarious state, was considered in danger, and that she expressed great anxiety to see me. I accordingly lost no time in obeying the summons, and found her worse than even my foreboding fears had represented. She began to sink rapidly after I had

been written to ; and had I been a few hours later, I should not have seen her alive. After imploring, in the most earnest manner, a blessing from above upon me, and tenderly exhorting me so to regulate my conduct as to merit it, she, in the most placid manner, as if sinking in sleep, breathed her last in my arms. Calm and solemn were her last hours ; and till her spirit had taken its flight, I was not able to persuade myself that death was so near. I was deeply affected, for she had loved me as none but a mother can love ; and although I had never in word or deed wilfully given pain to her heart, yet I now recalled to my mind many circumstances, in which I fancied I had not shown the kindness and solicitude for her comfort that I might have done, and my tears flowed fast. After the last melancholy duties were performed, I seemed to myself an isolated being in the world, without kindred, without any recognized tie of affection whatever ; and so great a void was there in my heart, that I despaired of its ever being filled.

Would to God I had never forgotten my mother's dying exhortations ; then should I have escaped much bitter retrospection, much poignant remorse. But to proceed with my story.

It had occasioned me much surprise, not to have heard from the Wilsons ; I now, however, learned that they had left home a month before I arrived, on a visit to a friend in the north, and were expected to return in a few weeks. As the solitude of my house was insupportable, in the present state of my spirits, I determined to leave it for a short time, and by close application to business, I hoped to succeed in regaining some degree of mental elasticity, and I was not disappointed. After the lapse of a few weeks, during which I had letters from Mrs. Wilson and Charles, informing me that they were returned to S——, I had regained health and cheerfulness, and felt able to revisit my home, and to pass a few days with the friends of my boyhood. I arrived—no kind welcome—no maternal embrace awaited me, but a blank, a soli-

tary hearth, and my spirits sunk at the contrast, while every well-known object reminded me of my loss. I called at Mrs. Wilson's, and found Margaret alone; she condoled with me in her low musical voice (so peculiarly expressive of sympathy), and mentioned her mother's regret at having been so distant at the time. I enquired for Charles;—he was not at home; and I learned that a gentleman named Osborne had purchased a large estate about five miles distant, that he had been introduced to the Wilsons, and that Charles and he were become almost inseparable companions, both being passionately addicted to the sports of the field:—"but," she added, "dine with us to-morrow, and you will meet him." I lingered some time longer in conversation with her, and in answer to my questions gathered that Mr. Osborne was about four-and-twenty, an exceedingly handsome man, unmarried, and liberal to profusion.

Mrs. Wilson had now entered the room; and I continued the subject, for the purpose of as-



certaining her opinion of their new neighbour ; and I was mortified at discovering that she, who had always endeavoured to moderate the extravagant praise or vehement dispraise in which Charles and I were, with youthful enthusiasm, in the habit of indulging, on all subjects, now seemed hardly able to check her own enthusiasm while expatiating upon the good qualities of Mr. Osborne, and on the advantage to Charles, in having such a friend—while her manner, more than her words, to my jealous apprehension, was fraught with a peculiar meaning ; and I was painfully sensible that her reception of me was not as cordial as usual, but that her manner was tinged with coldness : after a few desultory remarks, about I know not what, I left them.

I had not before known the exact nature of my feelings, in regard to Margaret ; true, I loved her—I never tasted such unmixed happiness as in her society ; but the emotions I experienced at hearing these encomiums, con-

vinced me that I madly, desperately loved her ; while the bare thought of another possessing her drove me to distraction.

I roamed through the woods the whole of the day, regardless of food or weather ; one moment rapidly striding along with hands clenched, and talking aloud—the next in moody silence, slowly sauntering with unequal steps. Night came on, as, cold and wet, I returned home with the determination to declare my love to Margaret. I lay down, but not to rest—imagination teemed with thoughts which harassed and tortured me, as I revolved in my mind the probability of losing her. I strove to calm my feelings, but in vain ; hope and fear by turns preponderated ; and in this state of restless excitement I passed the night, which seemed the longest I had ever known. Morning came at last, and I rose at a late hour, feverish and unhappy—all this extreme excitement might be premature. I had not yet seen Mr. Osborne, and not a hint had been dropped of his entertaining the slightest

regard for Margaret—beautiful and amiable as she was, yet her total want of fortune would be an impassable barrier to matrimony in the eyes of most men ; but love like mine was a sentinel ever on the watch, ever ready to give the alarm, on the slightest apprehension of danger, to which my soul tumultuously responded. Well, I was now to meet this handsome man, this Apollo, and with a beating heart I arrived at Mrs. Wilson's ; the first thing that drew my attention was, a more elaborate finish than usual in Margaret's dress : she was always dressed well, but with simplicity ; but to-day, there had evidently been more care taken to set off her charms with the "foreign aid of ornament;" and an occasional look at the glass, I thought, betrayed her consciousness that it was so. Mr. Osborne and Charles entered soon after me, and after a warm greeting from one, and a formal introduction to the other, I took a survey of the new acquaintance ; hope withered within me—he was well made, rather tall, with a manly

open countenance ; dark hair and eyes, and good teeth, which I was spiteful enough to think he shewed a great deal oftener than was necessary. He was evidently good-humoured, and seemed perfectly satisfied with himself—I watched him closely while addressing Margaret—his manner was easy and assured, while she slightly coloured when he spoke. I cursed him and his recommendations in my heart, and felt so chilled and soured, that I was almost inclined to make the excuse of illness, and return home. During dinner, Mrs. Wilson was studiously attentive to her guest—it was over at last, however, and the ladies withdrew ; and Mr. Osborne, who had been in high spirits all the time, now became more loud and animated in his conversation, which turned almost entirely upon dogs and horses, subjects on which I was not at home ; but with which Charles and he seemed perfectly conversant.

I observed, that Mr. Osborne possessed the faculty of drinking a considerable quantity of

wine, without being the worse for it ; indeed, it only seemed to have the effect of making his mirth a little more boisterous ; while I, who was by inclination averse from wine, and by habit unused to it, drank glass after glass, without feeling the slightest exhilaration. I sat moody and unhappy, only uttering monosyllables now and then ; and their frequent bursts of laughter sounded harsh and grating to my ears—so much out of tune were my feelings. At length I could bear it no longer ; I left the table, and although I strove to conquer my moodiness, I have no doubt it was sufficiently obvious in my countenance as I entered the drawing-room, for I was a novice at dissembling my feelings, and Mrs. Wilson's enquiry of " how I liked Mr. Osborne ? " was not calculated to soothe them. Conversation languished, and it was a relief from its dullness, when Margaret proposed music. I remarked, that she played music of a very different description from any I had ever heard her play before ; to which she replied, " that she

had been taking lessons for some time, and omitted no opportunity of practising." Her execution was surprisingly improved, and the demon whispered, "It is for him." I understood Charles and his friend would not finish their potations for a considerable time, and as Mrs. Wilson did not leave the room, I was deterred from saying much that I intended to say ; however, Margaret promised me an hour's conversation on the following morning, and feeling really unwell, I took my leave. Notwithstanding my anxiety, I slept for some hours (thanks to the wine), and rose comparatively refreshed. I had attained to a greater degree of calmness than I expected ; or rather, I believe it was a dogged determination to know my doom from her own lips, and to brave the worst.

### CHAPTER III.

“ O impotent estate of human life,  
Where hope and fear maintain eternal strife ;  
Where fleeting joy does lasting doubt inspire,  
And most we question what we most desire.”

PRIOR.

AT the appointed hour, I found Margaret alone, her mother having gone to make a morning call ; her countenance was rather pale and thoughtful, and her air not free from a degree of embarrassment. Love is quicksighted in detecting the slightest symptoms of change of manner, and I knew not whether these boded good or ill to me ; at all events, I thought, I soon will know. After a few casual observations, “ Mar-

garet," I said—and my voice faltered with emotion as I began—"What I have to say is of the deepest interest to me—I love you, and have long loved you—many circumstances, trivial in themselves, must have convinced you of my attachment. Till within these few days, I was not conscious of the intense, the absorbing nature of my love; but I feel it can only cease with my life, the future happiness or misery of which will depend on your answer to my avowal." My confidence increased as I went on, for I spoke from the heart, and one always speaks well when that is the prompter. While speaking, my eyes were fixed on her face; she looked down, and coloured, and there was palpable and considerable embarrassment in her manner, as she answered, in the lowest tones of her melodious voice,—“I will not attempt to deny, Edward, that I have always regarded you with esteem, as the friend of my brother, and always shall do so; but I do not know—I cannot—indeed, mamma will not——”



She hesitated, her confusion increased, and she stopped.

“Ah!” I exclaimed, passionately, “do not reject one whom you have known so long, and whose heart beats only for you, and prefer to him an acquaintance of yesterday—give me your love, Margaret! and I will smile at all the misfortunes that may befall me; without it, there will be no happiness for me in life—existence itself will be a burthen—why,” I said, “should this cursed Osborne—”

“No,” she said, interrupting me; “you are mistaken, Edward; he can never be more to me than he is at present, and your indignation is unfounded.”

“Answer me one question, Margaret,” I said; “are not your mother’s sentiments with regard to me, altered?—is not her behaviour to me cold?—in what have I offended her?”

“It is only your own imagination,” she said.

“No!” I replied, “it is not imagination—I must be blind not to discover the change in her

manner ; and equally palpable is it that she worships this Osborne." I spoke with bitterness.

"I can assure you," she said, "you are mistaken."

"Then, Margaret," I said, earnestly, "it is in your power to relieve my mind from the weight of anxiety which oppresses it, by saying, with your usual frankness, that you are not—"

We were here interrupted by the unexpected entrance of Mrs. Wilson, who was evidently surprised and displeased, while I felt not a little confused. I was speaking with warmth at the moment of her entrance, and sitting on the sofa by Margaret, with her hand clasped in mine. I rose and said something, not very intelligible, I believe ; but confidence returning, I resolved to ascertain at once if Mrs. Wilson would sanction my addresses. At a look from her mother, Margaret had left the room. I then declared my sincere attachment to her daughter ; that I had loved her from childhood ; that the world,

and all its gaieties, would be a desert to me, without her ; and that it should be the unre-mitted study of my life, to secure her comfort and happiness. She listened to me without interruption.

“ Mr. Douglas,” she replied, “ you are young—you have the warm and ardent feelings of youth, and I have no doubt, you think you love Margaret ; but it is too early in life for either of you to think of matrimony ; besides, Margaret has nothing whatever, and your fortune may be sufficient for a bachelor, but certainly it is not enough to justify your marrying a woman without a shilling. Young men, like yourself, have no notion, (how should they?) of the expenses matrimony brings in her train.”

“ But,” I said, eagerly, “ I ask only for your sanction : I will strive early and late to obtain wealth, and with the blessing of God, I doubt not I shall succeed ; in the mean time, I hope I may at least be permitted to correspond with Margaret.”

“No,” she replied, in a decided tone, “that must not be ; if you are successful in your endeavours to obtain wealth, and your attachment remains unaltered—”

“It is totally impossible,” I said, vehemently, interrupting her, “that I can ever cease to love her.”

“Ah!” she said, with a smile; “Mr. Douglas, when you have lived in the world as long as I have, you will think differently : I am old enough to remember more surprising things than that ; but I was about to say when you interrupted me, that whenever you are enabled to maintain a wife in that comfort which every woman ought to look for in the matrimonial state, I shall not object to your union.”

Discouraged as I was, I did not desist from my arguments ; at length I lost my temper, and made some pointed observations on their intimacy with Mr. Osborne, which for a moment irritated her ; however, she became calm, almost immediately, and coolly observed :

“ She presumed she was mistress in her own house.”

We parted. After an hour or two had elapsed, I wrote to Mrs. Wilson, apologizing for any rudeness or intemperance of language of which I had been guilty, and begged her to attribute it to the irritation of my feelings, at being so deeply disappointed. In the most submissive language, I besought her to rescind her determination. She answered my letter, and the tone of her answer was cold and formal. She made every allowance for the warmth of my language and feelings, and was resolved to adhere to her determination ; but they would be happy to see me in future as a friend. I had still hopes that Charles would call or write ; but as day after day wore away, I was compelled to relinquish them : he was too agreeably occupied, I thought, in cultivating the acquaintance of his new friend, to have any time to spare for me, and the claims of youthful friendship were postponed to the pursuits of interest or pleasure. As I thought

change of scene and occupation would be beneficial to me, I resolved to set out for London immediately ; but previously, I would see Margaret, and, if possible, prevail on her to correspond with me. I called accordingly at an hour when I thought it was most likely her mother would be out ; but I was disappointed. Mrs. Wilson was coldly polite, and would not give me the opportunity of a moment's conversation with Margaret ; and when I made an attempt to renew the subject nearest to my heart, she reminded me of the contents of her note, and I was compelled to submit : Margaret's manner was constrained, but I flattered myself that it would have been as frank as usual, but for her mother's presence. The following day I wrote to Margaret, and earnestly begged her to give me one private interview before I left S— ; and I took care that her mother should not prevent the letter reaching her. In her answer, she said she must decline corresponding with me, as she had given her mother a promise to

that effect ; that this letter was written with her mother's sanction ; and concluded by saying, she would at all times be glad to see me as a friend, and by wishing me health and happiness.

Considering the frank and cordial intimacy which had subsisted so long between us, I thought Margaret, notwithstanding her promise, might have written with a little less coldness and caution ; and fond of her mother as I knew her to be, still, I thought, she might have given me one interview. I was hurt at her indifference—I was stung with Charles's neglect ; while the cold and formal politeness of Mrs. Wilson was more galling to me than her utmost anger would have been ; and I felt this the more acutely, because, until the appearance of Mr. Osborne, she regarded me with favour ; and I am convinced that her penetration had detected my love for Margaret long before I was conscious of its existence. I hastened to London. My pale and haggard countenance at

first shocked Mr. Hunter, and he insisted on sending for medical advice ; but I explained to him, that I had been severely disappointed, and that my mind was a prey to contending emotions, but that I hoped soon to recover my equanimity. I endeavoured to avoid thinking upon Margaret—I sought to divert my ideas from dwelling upon past circumstances, by being more than ever occupied in the busy mercantile world, and by mingling in general society. I persevered for some weeks ; but I found myself still brooding on the one subject, to which it seemed that I was spell-bound. I have hitherto said but little of Mr. Hunter ; he was a man of integrity and principle—punctual in his engagements—a Christian in theory and practice ; and from him I constantly met with the kindest treatment—indeed, he was to me as a father—his wife had been dead ten years, and he had a son and two daughters. The son was a boy of fourteen. Caroline, the eldest daughter, was twenty ; she was considered by many to be



beautiful; and certainly her complexion and features were unobjectionable; but there was such a languishing expression of sentimentality upon them, relieved “ever and anon” by an affected smile, that I wondered how any one could admire her. She was weak, vain, and capricious—dress was her passion—sentiment her study—and to look interesting her ambition; she was nominally mistress of the house, but on her sister devolved the care and superintendence of every thing connected with the household. Mary was little more than sixteen, rather under the middle size, with dark brown hair, and lovely deep blue eyes; the most affectionate of daughters and sisters; unaffectedly interesting, gentle and good. Mr. Hunter always professed that he made no distinction between his daughters, and I have no doubt he thought he spoke the truth; but it was impossible for any one who had lived under his roof so long as I had, to avoid seeing that Mary was his favourite. When she spoke, he listened

with pleased and smiling attention, and sometimes delighted in playfully tormenting her; while Caroline's sickly delicacy was shocked, or, perhaps I should say, affected to be shocked, at the cheerful spirits and merry laugh of her sister. She never laughed: "None but those," she said, "whose minds were strangers to delicacy of sentiment and refinement of feeling, could enjoy boisterous mirth, and she did not envy them the enjoyment."

Mr. Hunter's house was old-fashioned, but large and commodious; and his establishment was suitable to a merchant of his wealth—at least, according to the notions of the old school to which he belonged, when solidity was preferred to show, and security to speculation. In technical language, he was a "good man," and report considerably magnified the quantum of his goodness; his daughters consequently were matrimonially to be desired, and Miss Hunter was pronounced lovely, unaffected, and sensible; while Mary's youth precluded her from

being the immediate object of admiration, although there were not wanting some who, like myself, infinitely preferred her. I was almost always of their parties, and I soon saw that Miss Hunter had admirers, and that owing to her vain and silly airs of affectation, she would disgust all but the mere fortune-hunters. She possessed one accomplishment in perfection—she played on the harp divinely; but there was always such a parade of coyness—such an affectation of bashfulness to be overcome, that much time was wasted before she could be prevailed upon to play; and even then, she would make some frivolous pretext to evade playing the music that was asked for, such as “she had forgotten it,” or, “it was too difficult for her.” And after all these “airs and graces,” as her father called them, her performance was beautiful, and her execution of the most difficult passages, brilliant; while her form, and her really beautiful arm, were never seen to so great advantage as at such a time; but the moment she rose, the illusion

vanished, and she was herself again. Among Caroline's admirers, was a gentleman of the name of Templeton ; he had been placed in Mr. Hunter's counting-house with the same prospect as myself—that of becoming a partner : his parents had died when he was a child, and when of age he would have ten thousand pounds. On my first arrival in Broad Street, there was a great deal of shyness and reserve between us ; but I soon penetrated the cause, and afterwards we were warm friends. He feared that I should regard Miss Hunter with the same admiration that he did—he little knew how deeply my affections were engaged elsewhere ; however, I soon convinced him that there was no probability of my being captivated by her attractions, and from that time I was his confidant. He was a noble-spirited, warm-hearted youth ; but I was convinced that she disliked him—he was too natural a being to suit the taste of a creature so artificial and capricious as herself.

## CHAPTER IV.

“ Full of wise saws and modern instances.”

AS YOU LIKE IT.

“ Like a fine bragging youth, he tells quaint lies,—  
How honourable ladies sought his love,  
Which he denying, they fell sick and died.”

MERCHANT OF VENICE.

I WAS one evening at a party, in conversation with Mr. Crawford, a lively and talkative old gentleman, nearly eighty—a “ *laudator temporis acti*.”

“ How is it,” he said, “ Mr. Douglas, that you are looking on, instead of joining the dancers ?”

“ Why, Mr. Crawford,” I replied, “ I am not exactly in the mood at present.”

“ There it is,” he said, “ the mood ! I hope Miss Hunter has not infected you with her sentimental nonsense—you certainly are altered within the last three months, and to be plain with you, for the worse. The young people of the present day are very different from those I remember fifty or sixty years ago. In those days, rather than not dance at all, we would have danced with our grandmothers ; much less would we have allowed young and lovely women to be without partners.”

“ I must confess,” I said, “ that we are not so polite in our generation.”

“ Polite !” he replied. “ No ; I think to see men lounging or stalking about, staring through their glasses at every woman in the room, is a breach of good manners ; and I always will maintain that the distinguishing characteristic of the well-bred man, the real gentleman, is politeness to the fair sex ; but the well-bred man is a ‘ rara avis ’ in these degenerate days, and the genus will soon be extinct.”

“ You are severe, Mr. Crawford,” I replied ; “ after all, your old-fashioned politeness was not without its drawbacks—it was excessively formal.”

“ Yes,” he replied, with vivacity, “ in comparison with that now in vogue, which is not even respectful ; but I tell you, Mr. Douglas,” and the old gentleman took hold of me by the button, “ it is the same in every class of men, down to the lowest ; there is more vice and bad language, and far less civility, than when I was a young man—you can’t deny it.”

“ Increase of population,” I said.

“ Pshaw !” said he, interrupting me, “ nonsense ; there is ten times more vice in the world than there was fifty years since. With all the boasted march of intellect, and diffusion of knowledge, with your steam-boats and railroads, crimes are not diminished, but the contrary ; and as for civility from inferiors, you can’t expect it,—they are too well educated for that. Walk through the streets and suburbs of this metro-

polis, and your ears will be shocked every hour in the day with language most obscene and revolting from mere boys and girls, the greater part of whom have been educated. I had a servant who lived with me for more than thirty years: he could neither read nor write, but a more faithful, civil, honest fellow, never lived. Since his death I have had six—not one of whom lived with me longer than two years; but these could read and write, ay, and talk politics too; of these rascals two got drunk, and one robbed me.”

“ Well, Mr. Crawford,” I said, “ I am still prepossessed in favour of education. I am sure you will admit there is a diminution of one vice in the upper and middle classes of society—and it will in time extend to the lower—I mean the vice of drinking.”

“ Mr. Douglas,” he replied, gravely, and my button was released from his grasp, “ when I was young no one enjoyed his bottle with a friend more than I did; nor did I confine myself



to one, or even two, sometimes. Those were the days of English heartiness and warm hospitality —‘in vino veritas.’ Give me the man who will take his glass with his friend. I hate your milk-sops ; and for this vice, as you are pleased to call it, sir, what have you substituted ? I’ll tell you ; these men who profess to dislike drinking, because, forsooth, it is criminal, read sentimental poetry and novels, talk cant, and debauch their friends’ wives and daughters ; so much for the improvement in morality.”

As he spoke these words, he bowed rather stiffly to me, and turned to a gentleman standing near us, with whom he entered into conversation. I liked Mr. Crawford, notwithstanding what appeared to me his unreasonable prejudice ; and in some points we agreed well enough : he warmly admired Mary Hunter, who, he said, was the most natural, unaffected girl he knew ; and in an equal degree disliked her sister. On looking round the room I discovered the latter—she was dancing—her countenance wore an unusually

animated expression of triumphant vanity, in place of its usual insipidity ; and I was at no loss to account for it. Her partner was a stranger to me : he was dark, and remarkably handsome, and seemed to be paying his court most assiduously. Mr. Templeton was near me, —his face was pale and troubled. I knew what he must feel, from my own experience.

“ Who is he ?” he said, in a low and agitated tone ; “ do you know him ?”

“ No,” I replied ; “ I never saw him till this evening.”

“ Douglas,” he said, “ I can stay no longer ; she declined dancing, as her spirits were unequal to the exertion this evening, she said. I conversed with her till I found, by her replies, that she was inattentive and absent. I was hurt, and quitted her—now she is all smiles.”

“ It is only the whim of the hour, Templeton,” I said ; “ you well know how much Miss Hunter is governed by caprice.”

“ She sees that I love her,” he replied, “ and

scorns me. With me she never smiles ; but is invariably absent, reserved, and cold. I wish, from my soul, I had adhered to my resolution of settling at Hamburgh, instead of being turned from it by the beauty of a fickle, heartless, unfeeling woman—who despises my love.”

“ Then she cannot be worthy of it, William,” I said.

“ You, at least, Edward,” he replied, “ can sympathise with me ; in spite of her coldness and disdain, I nursed and fostered my love, and persevered in hoping against hope ; but I now swear solemnly, that however hard the struggle, however intense my sufferings—I will conquer my passion for this proud woman.”

He pressed my hand warmly as he concluded, and left me immediately.

There was a seat vacant near Mary Hunter, and I took it ; she had been so much engaged that I had scarcely spoken to her.

“ Pray, Mary,” I said, “ who is that gentleman dancing with your sister ?”

“ Mr. Fortescue,” she replied ; “ do you not think him handsome ?”

“ Yes,” I said ; “ very much so.”

“ Did you ever,” she said, laughing, “ see Caroline in such spirits ? She is almost as lively as her younger sister, is she not ?”

“ Yes,” I replied ; “ and the more close the resemblance the better.”

“ A compliment, Mr. Douglas,” she said, laughing ; “ but,” in a more serious tone, “ did you observe how ill Mr. Templeton is looking ? I had hold of his arm, when all at once I felt it tremble : he looked pale, and complained of faintness : he was better presently, but I am sure he is not well ; and Mr. Crawford thinks so too. What an amusing man Mr. Crawford is ! He says I ought to have lived fifty years ago ; and I laughed and said, I would rather live now, if he pleased. He seems a little vexed with you—what have you been saying to him ?”

“ Oh ! nothing at all,” I replied ; “ you know he is rather peculiar in his opinions.”

“ But,” she said, “ I hope Mr. Templeton will be better : he is so kind, so good, and papa is very fond of him. I think he is gone.”

Our conversation was interrupted. Her hand was claimed ; and for a few moments my eyes followed her slight and youthful figure as she was dancing. I thought of poor Templeton, as looking round I saw Miss Hunter deeply absorbed in listening to Mr. Fortescue’s conversation ; which, I presumed, must be peculiarly agreeable to her notions of refined sentiment, as I had never before observed her countenance evince such unequivocal symptoms of pleasure ; and Mr. Fortescue, on his side, seemed struck with admiration, and assiduously striving to cultivate her regard.

“ So, Douglas,” said Mr. Phillips, (a quondam admirer of Miss Hunter,) “ another worshipper ; will the offering be accepted or rejected ?”

“ Do you know Mr. Fortescue ?” I asked.

“ I am not acquainted with him,” he replied, “ nor am I at all desirous to be ; and the reason

is, I like him not ; but it puzzles me to discover what attractions Miss Hunter possesses, exclusive of her probable fortune, which I admit is everything to him. But as to her beauty, where is it ?”

“ You once thought differently,” I said.

“ Upon my honour,” he replied, in a drawling and affected tone, “ you are mistaken. I never admired her—that is to say, seriously—although everybody thought so ; and I carried on the farce too long. In strict confidence I will tell you how it was. I was an idle man, in pursuit of novelty, and thoughtless of the pain I might inflict on a mind so delicately constituted as hers—for she is very susceptible, and fond of flattery—and much of my time was passed in her society. One evening I was rattling on as usual, when she suddenly sighed deeply, became absent, answered widely from the subject, actually mistook my name, and was lost in a profound reverie—infallible signs, were they not ?”

“ Signs of what ?” I said ; “ drowsiness ?”

“ You know very well,” he drawled, pushing me in the ribs with his forefinger ; “ in fact, no one could mistake. In tenderness to her susceptibility, when I found I was entangling her affections, I gradually, from that evening, withdrew. I believed her tender feelings were engaged in my favour ; and although she persuaded, or wished to persuade, herself that I was deeply in love with her, I was conscious that it was not in my power to respond to her sentiments. I took myself seriously to task, and upon my soul reproach myself to this day. You will think me egregiously vain, perhaps ; but to this hour I think that her spirits have never quite recovered their tone.”

The coxcomb here heaved a deep sigh, and looked pathetic.

“ Look at Miss Hunter at this moment,” I said ; “ she does not seem much chagrined at your desertion.”

“ Her gaiety is so unusual, that it appears to

me forced and unnatural," he replied. "But I'll tell you what I know of Mr. Fortescue: he has spent a fortune, has seen life in all its varieties, and is well acquainted with the sex—indeed, he is notoriously gay; and although he keeps up appearances, no one can tell by what means he raises the wind, unless it is by gambling, which I believe is the fact. He has heard, no doubt, that Mr. Hunter is rich, and is speculating for a fortune. I am sure it would grieve me to the soul to know that there was a probability of his succeeding, as she would be miserable, even if there were no lingering attachment to me; and I never can forget that she honoured me with her regard, insensible and unworthy as I am."

His voice subsided into a whine which would not have disgraced a Puritan of the Commonwealth, as he concluded, affectedly making use of his handkerchief, as if to check his rising sensibility. This all appeared superlatively ridiculous to me, who knew that he was for a long time "deucedly smitten" (his own words);



and as, although extremely plain, he dressed well, and admired himself, and talked sentiment, it might have been supposed probable that she would have liked him, especially as he was a man of fortune and character ; she merely tolerated him, however, at the most ; and latterly her indifference, or rather dislike, was apparent to all.

## CHAPTER V.

“ The king can mak a belted knight,  
A marquis, duke, and a’ that ;  
An honest man’s aboon his might,  
Guid faith he manna fa’ that ;  
For a’ that, and a’ that,  
His dignities, and a’ that ;  
The pith of sense and pride o’ worth,  
Are grander far than a’ that.”

BURNS.

“ What is our bliss, that changeth with the moon,  
And day of life that darkens ere ’tis noon ?”

PRIOR.

“ I SHALL checkmate you in four moves,” said  
Mr. Hunter.

“ I did not think it was quite so near as that,”  
I replied ; “ but I have no chance with you, sir.”

“ You shall see,” he said ; “ check !”

Mr. Hunter was an excellent player, and I played tolerably, and we frequently passed an hour or two at chess. Miss Hunter was engaged with a volume of poetry, and Mary had laid aside her netting, and was looking over our game.

"Mary, I have found it, and Mr. Fortescue is wrong," exclaimed Miss Hunter, with unusual vivacity.

I had made a move on the board, and Mr. Hunter was again about to check my king. He paused—and surprised at his delay, I raised my eyes to his face, which, instead of its usual serenity, wore an expression of doubt and anxiety, as he looked at his daughter.

"You named Mr. Fortescue, Caroline," he said; "where did you meet him?"

"At Mr. Hammond's, papa. Mrs. Hammond introduced him to us," answered Miss Hunter, with much less vivacity than before.

"Have you met him since, then?" asked Mr. Hunter.

“ Yes, papa, twice,” she replied.

“ He is four or five-and-thirty, and dark ?”  
said Mr. Hunter, interrogatively.

“ No, papa,” said Mary, with animation ; “ he does not look so old as that ; but he is handsome, and very agreeable, and his attentions to Caroline were noticed by everybody.”

“ Mary,” said Mr. Hunter, and he spoke in a tone of displeasure totally unexpected and new to her, “ I was speaking to your sister, and not to you—let her answer me ; and I think, considering how little you know of Mr. Fortescue, you ought to be silent.”

I had risen to leave the room, but Mr. Hunter laid his hand on my arm, and detained me. Tears stood in the eyes of the lovely Mary as her father spoke ; however, he observed them, and drawing her to him, imprinted a kiss on her forehead.

“ And now,” he said, in a serious tone, “ I will tell you the reason why I made these inquiries. Mr. Fortescue’s father, when a boy, came

up to London from Scotland with a few shillings in his pocket, and got employment. In the course of years, by his industry and frugality, which some years before his death degenerated into penuriousness, he amassed a fortune. I believe he was an honest man—at least as much so as is possible for a miser to be—which is barely so : he had but one child. When Mr. Fortescue was about four-and-twenty, his father died, and left him between forty and fifty thousand pounds : the young man had had a tolerable education ; but immediately after the death of his father launched into every extravagance and vice which money could purchase, or inclination prompt him to ; attended the gaming-houses and the race-course, kept women, and in a few years ran through all or nearly all that wealth, the accumulation of which had been the sole object for which his father cared to live. I have lost sight of Mr. Fortescue for three or four years ; but after what I have said, and which is no more than true, you will not think me unreasonable

in requesting from both of you, that you will discourage his intimacy as much as possible, without being guilty of actual rudeness."

"He spoke of you in the most respectful terms, papa," said Miss Hunter, evidently chagrined.

"Caroline," he answered, gravely, "if he spoke of me at all, he could not speak otherwise, to you, at least; unfeeling, indeed, must a daughter be, who would listen for a moment to insinuations, however oblique, derogatory to her father's character; but if he speaks the truth, he cannot connect my name with dishonour; it has been the study of my life to act honestly and honourably by all men—it is my pride—and the affection of my children is my happiness. Now, Mr. Douglas," turning to me, "whose move is it?"

No more was said on the subject; and when Mary bade us good night, Mr. Hunter kissed her with more than his usual affection, and her face was smiling as before.

I had no doubt that Mr. Hunter's account of Fortescue was correct, for he was scrupulously averse from speaking ill of any one; and there must have been powerful reasons for his being so explicit. It was evident to me that he knew the disposition of his daughter, and that he was fully warranted in apprehending that some needy and designing profligate might gain her affections. With respect to her, it remained to be seen whether her father's wishes would influence her conduct; or whether the regard which I was convinced she entertained for Mr. Fortescue would impel her to act in direct opposition to them. From the peculiar construction of her mind, I really almost feared the latter would be the case; as, notwithstanding the caprice and uncertainty of her disposition, she had, on some occasions, evinced unyielding obstinacy, which she chose to dignify by the title of firmness.

Mr. Templeton was in the country. Absence for a few weeks, he thought, would corroborate his resolution; and, besides, he was suffering

from indisposition caused by the struggle in his mind. In consequence of his absence, more business devolved upon me ; and since my return to Broad Street, I had scarcely heard from S——, when a neighbour from thence one day called upon me.

Mr. Jackson was a farmer and grazier of considerable property ; in common but expressive language, he was a rough diamond ; a class which, I believe, comprises many more individuals than the world supposes. He was not an ignorant man, although his manner was blunt, and his conversation rough, not a little deficient in grammatical accuracy, and mingled with oaths. He swore when he was vexed and when he was pleased ; in fact, on all occasions. However, beneath this hard and prickly rind, the kernel was sound ; under this unpromising exterior was a warm and feeling heart : he was hospitable and charitable, and his charity was unostentatious and practical. I had seen him often accosted by beggars ; and he would ask questions, and inva-



riably swear that they were lazy vagabonds, but he always finished by giving something. To be sure, it was evident that he had doubts sometimes ; for he would say, “ Well, d——e, there’s sixpence for ye, go and get drunk with it, will ye ; only do not let me see ye, that’s all.” At other times it was ; “ I believe you’re a d——d lazy chap ; but, howsomever, go to that ere door,” pointing to his own house, “ and tell em to give you some beer and summut to eat.” He was well known, and consequently frequently imposed upon ; but even if he detected them, it never prevented his giving relief to the next that applied. “ It’s d——d hard to be hungry, and without a morsel of bread to eat. I know I should steal if that ere was my case. Poor creters !” he would say ; and once he said, “ It’s past my finding out why some on us should live on the fat of the land, and others be starving. When I’m dead and gone, my young uns, some on em, may be brought to beg their bread from door to door ;” and he was silent for three minutes.

“ How are ye, Master Douglas,” he said, with a powerful grasp of the hand.

“ Very well, Mr. Jackson,” I said ; “ how are all at the farm ? I do not ask how you are.”

“ They’re all well at home,” he answered ; “ but it’s more than I am. Look at that ere fog, nasty yaller, d——d smoke, it ud kill me in a week. The sight of Lunnun’s enough for me. I was ill an hour before we got in.”

“ How many days have you been in town ?” I asked.

“ Days !” he answered. “ I came up yesterday, and I goes back to-morrow. It’s six years since I was here, and d——e if I come again, if I can help it. Here’s a fog now. I’d lay any money that at S—— there isn’t no fog whatsoever ; and I got no sleep last night with the noise and the bustle at the inn.”

“ Your stay is short, indeed,” I said.

“ Long enough,” he replied ; “ but as I wanted to take some money out of the Bank, I chose to come myself, ’stead of giving a power,

as they call it. The fact is, I've bought some land near the farm, and this ere money's to pay for it; and I was sick enough of Lunnun when I come afore, and good reason too. I was walking in the Strand, in the middle of the day, when d——e if a chap didn't fall down just afore me, in a fit, I suppose. I helped him up, and the fellow walked away; and when I got to the inn I went to pull out my watch, d——e if somebody hadn't pulled it out for me. I was savage, for it had been my father's, and was as big as a warming-pan. Some well-dressed men came and assisted me to get the chap on his legs, d——d civil too they were; and I believe some on em got it. Howsomever, I've never set eyes on't since; but it's cured me of picking up people. But I say, Master Douglas, you do not look as well as you used to do in the country."

"Do you not think so?" I said.

"Think!" he replied; "no, I'm sure on't. Ha! your mother was a good cretur, just like my missis; it's pity there ar'n't more like em.

There's Squire Osborne now, a man with plenty of money, and yet he hasn't got the heart to do what I call a charitable action. I've tried him, d——e, and I knows it. I'll tell ye how it was. Ye recollect Joe Richards, who lived in one of the squire's cottages. Well, the poor fellow was very ill, and couldn't pay his rent; and Nixon the steward (d——d skinflint!) threatened to turn him out if he did not pay in a few days. Joe's wife come and axed me to speak a word for em to the squire. Well, I goes to the Hall, and I warn't sorry to see Charles Wilson along with the squire; because, thought I, he'll speak in his behalf, knowing the chap. After saying how d'ye do, and how d'ye do? 'I'm come to ax a favour on ye, squire,' I said. 'What is it, Mr. Jackson?' said he. 'Why,' I said, 'this here tenant of yours, Joe Richards, owes six months rent: he has been laid up with a rheumatic fever, and ha'n't done a day's work for seven weeks.' 'I know nothing about it, Mr. Jackson,' says he; 'I leave all that to Nixon.'

‘ Well, but squire,’ says I, ‘ Nixon won’t let him stay unless he finds the money—the poor fellow can’t do it: he is a hard-working chap, as I know well, for he’s done many a day’s ploughing for me; and his wife’s an industrious woman; but this here fever’s thrown em all behindhand. He’s lived in the cottage twenty years; and if you’ll give him time, squire, I’ll find him work as soon as he’s able.’ ‘ Why, Mr. Jackson,’ says he, ‘ it’s a rule with me not to interfere in these matters—I leave them all to my steward. If I were to listen to complaints from the tenants, I should have no time at my own disposal.’ ‘ Well, but squire,’ says I, ‘ in this here case, as I knows the man to be industrious, I hopes you will do summut.’ ‘ No, Mr. Jackson,’ says he, ‘ I shall not—it’s a bad precedent. I have every reason to be satisfied with my steward, and he’ll do as he thinks best.’ Well, then, he offered me wine, and axed after missis and the children, as if he cared one straw about them, and I marched off; and this Squire

Osborne spends a d——d sight of money too, 'on his dogs, and his horses, and his company ; it'll come home to him some day, leastways I hope so ; and to think of Charles Wilson, that I always thought so good-tempered, never saying one word for poor Richards, for all he knowed him,—that did surprise me. I looked hard at him, but I warn't going to ax him ; if he didn't speak of hisself, he might hold his tongue for ever and ever for me, d——e, if he mightn't. Well, my boy, what did I do, d'ye think ?”

“ I think I can tell,” I said.

“ You think I lent him the money,” he said ; “ ay, that's the way you young chaps would do, at least some on ye ; but I knowed better. I marched away from the hall in a precious humour, straight to Richards's cottage. ‘ Missis,’ I says to his wife, ‘ how's Joe ?’ ‘ He's very weak, Mr. Jackson,’ says she ; ‘ and worries hisself becos he can't get to work. Will ye like to see him ?’ ‘ No,’ says I, ‘ not now, missis. Do ye think he'd like to live in one of my cottages,

old Smith's?' 'I'm sure we should,' says she, and began crying. 'Well,' says I, 'as soon as your husband can come, he shall have it. It mayn't be quite so good as this; but, howsomever, I'll promise you sha'n't be turned out on't while I live; and Tom's a good boy, he'll behave well to ye when I'm in my grave, for his old father's sake. So come to-morrow if you like.' 'It's very kind, Mr. Jackson, of you,' says she, sobbing; 'then you've seen the squire?' 'Squire be d——d,' says I; and off I marched, glad to get out of the house, for I can't bear to see a woman crying. Well, I tells my missis all about it, and I wouldn't let the children go to bed, but kept em up to supper, and made missis sing a song, and I got quite how-come-ye-so. Joe got into the cottage where old Smith lived. (You remember Smith, a lame man, he had worked at the farm all his life; well, he's dead.) My missis, she's a good creter—sent to Smith's (I mean Joe's) cottage gruel and nourishing things, and the chap's as hearty as ever, and at work for me."

Mr. Jackson was about the middle height, with "a fair round belly," and round ruddy shining face. During this conversation, he stood with legs wide apart, and back to the fire, and holding the skirts of his blue coat—his hat was hardly on his head, for he had pushed it back off his forehead, and he always wore it cocked on one side. As he proceeded, his body moved from side to side, resting alternately on either leg; while his chain and enormous seals vibrated like a pendulum, with a corresponding motion; but when he came to the account of his interview with the squire, he drew himself up with an air of pride. His red waistcoat became more protuberant, and his boots creaked as, alternately rising on his toes, and falling back on his heels, he looked at me with a countenance, in which a fear-nothing formidable expression was curiously blended with jolly good-humoured satisfaction.

"But," he said, "ar'n't ye surprised at Charley Wilson? I knowed one word from



him would have settled the business ; 'cause Osborne and him are always together,—and besides, there's this here match between his sister and Osborne, which is to take place soon, as I hears. I've often seen 'em together, walking or riding about, and the squire's continually at Mrs. Wilson's—I always thought as how you were partial to the girl, because you were always there; howsomever, you knows best—she is a pretty creetur for certain, but if she's like her brother, d——e if I valley her prettiness a straw. Howsomever, Mrs. Wilson seemed vastly pleased when I see her, at the thoughts on 't—she's fond of money, I knows."

My heart died within me as he spoke; scarcely knowing what I was about, I poked and stirred the fire, already fierce, till Jackson swore, "he couldn't stand it no longer," and at this moment, Mr. Hunter came in, to my great relief; and soon after, Mr. Jackson departed. I had striven hard to prepare myself for this death-blow to my happiness; but there was

always a latent lingering hope, to which I clung with desperate tenacity, that it might not come. Now I awoke at once from the warm rose-coloured illusions of a dream, to the cold grey morning of reality. Should I see her once again, and know from herself if she had irrevocably accepted him? Did she persuade herself he could love her as I did? Was she dazzled by the splendour of dress and equipage, to which his fortune would entitle her to aspire? Did she love him? I sickened as this thought passed through my mind; but on the other hand, my obtaining an interview with her was quite uncertain, and if I did obtain one, what purpose would it answer?—her mother and brother were eager for the alliance, and she—I feared to ask myself. No, I would not attempt to see her—I should only expose my own weakness—pride forbade that; immediately, the stream of my thoughts flowed in another channel. I would forget her—I would travel—I would become the man of the world—the gay

man of fashion—there was no dearth of lovely girls in the world. I enumerated in my mind those of my own acquaintance—I would make a fortune—I would purchase a large estate in Dorsetshire, and my wife's equipage and jewels should make Mrs. Osborne look pale with envy. To these, succeeded other and gloomier thoughts—of revenge—of self-murder. I would challenge this intruder, this destroyer of my happiness—I would lie in wait for him, and his heart's blood should flow; and, incomprehensible as it may seem, when I thought of suicide, I felt a gloomy pleasure in the idea that my death would perhaps give a momentary pang to the scheming mother, with her cursed politeness, and to her heartless daughter. These and a thousand other thoughts, equally incoherent, rushed through my mind; until at length, torn by conflicting passions, and wearied with the struggle, the energies of body and mind were prostrated, and a dangerous fever attacked me. In my fits of delirium, which recurred

often, I constantly repeated the names of Margaret, of Charles, of Osborne ; and for some time, they despaired of my life ; but my hour was not yet come. Alas ! why was my life prolonged, to be embittered by the tortures of an accusing conscience ? Why was I spared to become a guilty man ? After several weeks of suffering, I recovered, but remained for some time in a state of great weakness. From Mr. Hunter, and Templeton, who was returned from the country, I experienced unremitted kindness ; while Mary read to me, sang to me, or conversed with me, anxious that nothing should be forgotten which might conduce to my recovery or amusement. As to Miss Hunter, I need scarcely say, her kindness never extended beyond an occasional enquiry after me, in a tone of the most languid indifference.

## CHAPTER VI.

“ Have I then no tears for thee, my father ?  
Can I forget thy cares, from helpless years ?  
Thy tenderness for me ? An eye still beam’d  
With love ? A brow that never knew a frown,  
Nor a harsh word thy tongue ? ”

THOMSON.

MR. TEMPLETON was looking better ; he had struggled with his passion, evidently with some success ; still, there were occasional symptoms of a tendency to relapse, and I saw that Miss Hunter had it in her power to rekindle the flame, almost by a breath. If, by chance, she addressed him in a tone a little more bland than usual, a gleam of sunshine, as it were, lighted up his countenance, and was as speedily with-

drawn, as she relapsed into her usual indifference; with an effort, however, he would rally his spirits, and every time with less difficulty. Mr. Hunter was very partial to him; their characters, in many points, were assimilated; and it would have gratified him to the utmost to have seen his daughter united to such a man. I believe there was a time, when Mr. Hunter hoped that she would have appreciated him as he deserved to be; that hope, however, he had long discovered to be fallacious—and on the subject of attachment, his opinions were so refined and delicate, that he would have shrunk from endeavouring to influence his daughter by the mere suggestion of his wishes; except in the case of such a notorious pretender as Fortescue, against whom he conceived it to be his duty to caution her, relating, however, all he knew of him, in justification of his interference.

Since my illness, the friendship subsisting between Mr. Templeton and myself was strengthened by the bond of mutual sympathy. We

had both experienced the misery of unrequited love, and I was more than ever sensible of his intrinsic excellence, and of the marked and broad distinction between some features of our respective characters ; his imagination was neither romantic nor heated, but tempered by a reasoning and sound judgment, (except perhaps in the instance of his attachment to Miss Hunter,) and his virtuous principles derived support from the natural firmness and inflexibility of his disposition, which at the same time was cheerful, communicative, and sincere. On the contrary, the tendency of my mind, as far back as I could remember, was to entertain chimerical and extravagant views of life ; imagination revelled in the ideal enjoyment of future pleasures, and was pampered by indulgence : and so far from checking these thoughts when presented to me, I rather courted and solicited them ; while the sober dictates of sense and reason were disregarded. From this habit, proceeded my deficiency in firmness of resolution, and strength

of mind, qualities in which Mr. Templeton eminently excelled me ; as he likewise did in a rational and correct estimate of the affairs of life, and of human felicity.

It was soon gently and delicately communicated to me that Margaret was a wife, and that cards had been sent to me. Mr. Hunter, while making this communication, exhorted me to rouse myself, to bear the disappointment with a manly spirit ; and set before me the duties to myself, and to my fellow-men, which I was bound to fulfil. No one could talk better on this subject than he, and my heart assented to the truth of his arguments ; but I was like those, who, after long indulgence in opium, or some intoxicating drug, are suddenly deprived of it entirely. My mind had lost its energy ; wretched and listless, I felt unfitted for the world, unable to contend with it—for discharging its duties I had an indolent aversion—and for its pleasures a sickly distaste—they were “weary, flat, and stale.” In this frame of



mind, I determined to quit Mr. Hunter, relinquishing the intention of becoming his partner, and to go abroad. I had eight hundred a year, a sum amply sufficient for my wants and superfluities—I valued not money for its own sake, and there was no longer the same inducement for me to acquire it. I informed Mr. Hunter of my determination, which at first he would not listen to. He endeavoured to persuade me to postpone it for a time ; and in the interim, with change of scene, and alternate occupation, health and spirits would return, and I should then be more competent to decide on its propriety, which at present, he said, I was not capable of doing. In all probability he was right ; however, after considering and weighing the reasons for and against my going, as impartially as a man always does when his mind is previously made up, I began to make preparations for my departure, which I resolved should be as soon as I recovered strength sufficiently to travel.

In a few days I was to set out. I had not yet been out of the house, and was lying on a sofa, thinking on things past, present, and to come. I had seen none of the family, for Mr. Hunter had been confined to his room by indisposition all day, and his daughters were out ; but I expected Mr. Templeton. In the evening he came—his countenance expressed sorrow.

“ Templeton,” I said, “ what has happened ? ”

“ Miss Hunter has eloped,” he said, in a calm but sorrowful tone.

“ With whom,” I asked ; “ Mr. Fortescue ? ”

“ Yes,” he replied ; “ she left her home yesterday morning, soon after breakfast, and was not expected back to dinner ; as you are aware, Mr. Hunter dined out, and on his return in the evening, he found a letter from her, informing him that she was that morning married to Mr. Fortescue, and concluded, I suppose, as is usual, by begging her father’s forgiveness.”

“ Well,” I said, “ Mr. Templeton, was I not

right in my opinion of Miss Hunter ? But what infatuation must have possessed her, to throw herself into the arms of such a man !”

“ Infatuation, indeed !” he replied ; “ and how could I have ever been so mistaken in her, as to love her as sincerely as I did ; but I saw her through a false medium—I was weak and foolish. Good God ! that she should deceive her father—that kind, indulgent father—I can scarcely think it real. And worse, even worse than that—to marry the very man of whom he had, so unusually for him, spoken in unqualified terms of dislike—in fact, the only one of her admirers of whom he had such well-grounded cause to disapprove. I never could have supposed her capable of such duplicity, such perverseness, such ingratitude. The day will come, I fear, when she will bitterly regret ever having listened to the persuasions of such a profligate.”

“ At all events,” I replied, “ she had been warned ; and by one of whose disinterestedness

she could have no doubt, any more than of his paternal affection and kind feelings, which she has so cruelly outraged."

"Yes," he said, "his feelings are deeply wounded at her conduct ; I did not see him last night ; but the shock brought on a fit of the gout, under which he is now suffering—he sent for me this morning, and I sat with him, till he seemed inclined to doze : he only mentioned the circumstance, without commenting upon it, and said that pain and sorrow had kept him awake all night—Mary, too, has been with her father almost the whole of the day."

Mr. Templeton seemed not at all disinclined to talk on the subject, and we continued the conversation for some time longer.

Among Mr. Hunter's acquaintance was a gentleman named Forster, whom he had known for a considerable period. He was about fifty—he had lived in a state of single blessedness till four or five years before this time. Mrs. Forster was five-and-twenty years, there or thereabouts,

younger than her husband ; as gay, giddy and thoughtless, as he was grave, steady and saturnine ; by the by, it has often struck me as curious, that men who marry wives so much younger than themselves, should so often give the preference to women of a lively and volatile disposition ; particularly when, as in this case, such a disposition is so diametrically opposed to their own—making the disparity in age more conspicuous, by contrariety of taste and clashing of opinions. It seems to be expected that Hymen, in conjugating these adverse qualities, will blend them in such a manner as to produce one harmonious whole ; whereas, they stand out in bolder relief, and the contrast is more glaring from the juxta-position.

Mr. Fortescue contrived to be at most of the parties to which Miss Hunter was invited ; his showy and specious address was a sufficient passport in the eyes of many, who pardoned his irregularities, for the sake of his elegant manners, and the gaiety of his conversation. Mrs.

Forster, of course, was inclined to be charitable to him, from the levity of her disposition ; and as she and Miss Hunter were extremely intimate, what could be more natural than Mr. Fortescue being frequently at her house ? At other houses it was necessary that he should be more guarded and circumspect in his addresses to her, in order to elude the observation of her father and friends ; but here he could pour in her ears that intoxicating adulation, always pleasing, often irresistible to the female heart. They had many interviews—Mr. Forster was often out ; and when at home, it was not difficult to hoodwink him, as his penetration was not remarkably acute ; and besides, Mr. Fortescue's versatility of character enabled him to be " all things to all men," and to adapt himself with ease to his humour. It was under the pretext of spending the day with Mrs. Forster, as she had done before, that Miss Hunter left home, on the day of her marriage ; and as if in utter defiance of parental caution, preferred the un-

certain, interested, professing love of a man with whom she had been acquainted only a few months, to the warm, considerate, and long-proved tenderness of a father. Mr. Fortescue knew that she had no fortune ; but he knew just as well, that although Mr. Hunter might be displeased at first, yet that he would soon be softened ; for such was his nature, that he could not cherish resentment long, and pride and affection would impel him to give her something considerable.

It was my intention to travel by easy stages, to the South of France, and thence to direct my course wherever inclination prompted me. I arranged to correspond with Mr. Templeton, and Mr. Hunter also, as he insisted on it. I was gratified to see the latter so much recovered, and resigned, if not cheerful. Mary had grieved for her sister, but her father was better, and she loved him ; little did this gentle girl foresee the trials in store for her. She turned her cheek to me, as to a brother, as I bade them farewell ; and I saw her not again for two years.

## CHAPTER VII.

“ When Cheerfulness, a nymph of healthiest hue,  
Her bow across her shoulder slung,  
Her buskins gemmed with morning dew,  
Blew an inspiring air that dale and thicket rung.”

COLLINS.

THE air and exquisite scenery of the south of France and the Pyrenees, proved equally beneficial to body and mind. I shall never forget the first impression made upon my mind at the sight of the Pyrenean mountains. Scenes of solitary grandeur, and strains of solemn music, had always the power to chase from my mind all wicked, desponding, and gloomy thoughts; and not only these, but also such as more frequently beset us—light, vain, and frivolous ima-



ginations ; and in their place to breathe into my soul a holy calm, a spirit of devotion, which too soon evaporated when I mingled again with my fellow-men, and became "of the earth, earthy." As I now contemplated the sublime magnificence of the prospect, I yielded to its overpowering influence, and my mind was penetrated with a deep feeling of religious awe. I thought of the power, the goodness of the Deity ; and of the insignificance of his creatures, as, striving for riches, struggling for power, engrossed by all the fleeting interests of the day, slaves to the dominion of passion, they "strut and fret their hour" till the scene is closed.

My excursions were almost always on foot, and many trifling but amusing incidents occurred, and withdrew my attention from past events. I was so much delighted with the surrounding scenery, that I remained in the neighbourhood of the Pyrenees for several months. During this time I had received letters from England, and I learned that Mr. Hunter was well ; that

after the lapse of considerable time he had seen Mrs. Fortescue, but was resolute not to see her husband, and that he made her an annual allowance. Mr. Hunter and Mr. Templeton were both regular in their correspondence with me, and their letters were always of a nature to strengthen and support my mind. I had now been much longer than usual without a letter, but made sure of receiving one at Paris, where I was going, and to which place I had desired them to direct their letters. At Paris, accordingly, I found a letter from Mr. Templeton, by which I learned that Mr. Hunter had been seriously ill; and in a few days he wrote to me himself. The superscription was very unlike his usual masculine handwriting; and on opening the letter, I was surprised at the melancholy tone which pervaded it, and which was so different from his usual manly and cheerful style. There was an evident depression of spirits, and I thought something more than illness was necessary to account for it, in the mind of so true

a Christian as I knew Mr. Hunter to be. Alas ! we are all men of like passions and infirmities ; and there are trials which the firmest believer in Christianity finds as difficult to be borne as does the mere man of the world.

Mr. Hunter never, in any of his letters, made allusion to the nature of the affliction which pressed upon him ; but I noticed that he never, from this time, made any mention of his son, nor did his letters ever regain their former healthy tone. I was surprised that Mr. Templeton should be reserved on the subject ; but in a few weeks he was sufficiently explicit. However, I defer his narrative till my return to England, which took place in the course of a few months. I mingled little in gaiety and frivolity at Paris, but found a great deal to interest me in the different public exhibitions. I am no judge of paintings ; but I think it is nearly impossible for any one, endued with a moderate degree of sensibility, to restrain his admiration of the beauty and grandeur of the different master-

pieces of the art ; and I believe I experienced more enjoyment in contemplating the works of the great masters, from the circumstance of my inability to criticise, as well as my disinclination to do so. At all events, my pleasure was unalloyed, although it might not equal in intensity the raptures of the connoisseur. That genius must indeed be of a high order, which is able to portray nature in her sunshine and her storms, temples and towers in their pride and their decay, which is able to place before our eyes the apostles, the saints, the miracles of holy writ, the classical mythology of antiquity, and the glorious recollections of historical and chivalrous achievements ; as well as to depict accurately and forcibly every emotion, every passion, which beautifies or disfigures the human face divine. Another unfailing source of delight to me was music, of impressions from which I was nervously susceptible from my earliest remembrance ; so powerfully, indeed, were my feelings moved by it, that to avoid being thought ridi-

culous or affected, I frequently strove to suppress them.

I made but little acquaintance ; but there was a Frenchman named Dubois, whom I often met at public places, and latterly we became tolerably intimate : in face he was plain almost to ugliness, however, nature or art amply compensated in other respects. His address was insinuating, and his manners polished to the highest degree ; while his conversation was so lively, so various, withal so free from egotism or display, that one speedily became unconscious of his external disadvantages, which seemed, as it were, to vanish : he had travelled a great deal, spoke five or six languages fluently, was an enthusiast in painting, and almost as great a lover of music as myself.

After a considerable stay, I left Paris in company with Dubois, who was going to Lyons to visit a distant relation, and there I left him. It was my intention to spend some months in Italy, but I prolonged my stay at Lausanne ; and while there, received a letter from Mr. Tem-

pleton, giving such a melancholy account of Mr. Hunter, as induced me to abandon my design of crossing the Alps, for the present; and as my health was so firmly established, and my mind had regained so much calmness, although occasionally disturbed by a shade of regret, I determined on returning immediately to England.

## CHAPTER VIII.

“ How sharper than a serpent’s tooth it is  
To have a thankless child.”

KING LEAR.

IN absence it is neither easily nor willingly that the imagination pictures to itself the change effected by sickness and sorrow, in the countenance that has always been expressive of health and tranquillity ; and although we see these startling changes occurring daily, nay, hourly, in persons for whom, comparatively, we have no regard ; yet are we averse from believing the possibility of a similar change in those we love and esteem ; and thus it was with me. I was prepared by Mr. Templeton, on my arrival, to

find a great alteration in Mr. Hunter ; but, notwithstanding, I was absolutely shocked at his appearance : his hale and ruddy complexion had changed its hue to a yellow paleness—his eyes were sunken—his deep voice now faltered and trembled—his erect figure and firm walk were now drooping and tottering. Formerly he was scrupulously clean in his person and neat in his apparel, now unshaven and slovenly ; he seemed regardless of everything in which he used to take pleasure ; while the pettishness of his answers, occasionally, to Mary's gentle remonstrances, painfully accorded with the change in his person. He was evidently sinking heart-broken to the grave : he held out his hand, and pressed mine, but said not a word. I turned to Mary—she was very pale, and there were traces of deep grief and suffering in her countenance ; she began to say something on my return, but tears interrupted her, and she left the room. Mr. Hunter spoke :—“ That dear girl,” he said, “ has been my only comfort through this trying visitation. The



Almighty has laid his hand upon me, and my spirit is bowed to the dust ; perhaps I shall find some relief in communicating to you the particulars of our calamity." He then proceeded in his melancholy story : he seemed entirely to have forgotten that I knew the particulars of it while abroad, from Mr. Templeton, for all minor thoughts were absorbed in grief.

John, who was at school when I left England, was soon afterwards taken into the counting-house, and for some time seemed to be perfectly satisfied and steady ; he was allowed a liberal salary, and his evenings were generally passed at home. He soon, however, changed his plan, and was generally out after hours of business ; but as he did not stay late, his father made no observations about it, as he did not wish to keep too strict a watch upon him. Mr. Hunter occasionally missed small sums of money from his desk, and sometimes from his cash-box ; but at first supposed that his memory was failing him, and that he was in error, for he was of all

men least prone to suspicion. This having occurred, however, five or six times, excited in his mind strange suspicions, which were soon changed into certainty.

It was John's business to take the banker's book to the banking-house to be made up, which was usually done every week. It had not, however, been done for a fortnight, and Mr. Hunter sent a clerk with it for that purpose. The book was returned, and, "Mr. Douglas," said the old gentleman, in a tremulous voice, "conceive, if you can, my agony, the agony of a father, when I found that my signature had been forged to a cheque for four hundred pounds, payable to duties. John had received the money himself, about a week previously ; and as he knew that the book was sent to be made up, and that detection was inevitable, he absconded on the very morning of the day on which the discovery was made." He then proceeded to state that he inserted advertisements in all the papers, offering pardon, and even reward, to the fugitive, if he

•

would return to his home ; but for nearly six months all inquiries were ineffectual. At length Mary received a scrawl from him, dated " Chelmsford Gaol," where he was committed to take his trial at the assizes for stealing a horse ; and yet, distressing as these tidings were to Mr. Hunter, they were a relief, after the harrowing anxiety and uncertainty he had endured. Mr. Templeton and a solicitor instantly went to Chelmsford, an arrangement was made, the recognizances were forfeited, and he returned home ; and the paternal heart cherished the hope of his reformation, only to be again wounded by disappointment. He was received most kindly by his father, and everything was forgiven ; but he evinced neither sorrow nor contrition ; in fact, seemed perfectly callous to feeling or shame. A few weeks before John left school, Mr. Hunter took into his house a female servant, whose father, in former years, he had known to be a hard-working man. The usual reference as to character was given, and the answer was such as

to leave no room for doubt; she was a pretty-looking girl, about twenty. John had been but a short time in the house when accident discovered that an improper intimacy subsisted between them, and she was immediately discharged; and after inquiries proved that the character was fictitious, and given by a confederate, and that she had been on the town. There was no doubt that she suggested to John the plan of robbing his father, and that she received a part of the money, as he admitted he knew where she was living at the time of the robbery. After remaining at home about two months, this hardened vagabond decamped a second time, having previously succeeded in picking a lock, and obtaining about thirty pounds, as well as a watch and some trinkets, taken from his sister's bedroom; since then nothing had been heard of him. To conclude in Mr. Hunter's words:—"I every day expect to hear the awful announcement that he is taken and condemned to an ignominious punishment, perhaps to that of death.

I pray God that this cup may pass from me ;” and he clasped his hands together as if in prayer. “ Oh ! that I could see him once, only once more—he should hear me pray for him with my last breath—he would see his father’s gray hairs, which he has brought with sorrow——” overcome with grief, he could say no more.

Here was a blow which he could not support : he had felt acutely the ingratitude of his eldest daughter, but he had struggled, and successfully, to maintain at least the appearance of resignation and tranquillity ; but neither his natural fortitude, nor his religious principles, sustained him under this affliction. Every attention had been paid to the education, and every care taken of the morals of this boy : he had been placed with a clergyman of the established church, an exemplary man, the number of whose pupils was limited ; but his temper was obdurate, and he seemed to have no wish to excel. Still there were no indications of a tendency to such depravity as he so soon manifested. Mary was

devotedly fond of her father ; I do not think it possible for father or daughter to be more strongly and reciprocally attached than they were ; and it was to be feared that the end to which his wounded spirit was hastening him, would almost be fatal to her. Her frame was naturally delicate ; and a few months of intense anxiety had done more than many years could have done, with only the usual and common troubles of life. She lamented to me the wretched situation in which they were placed, and expressed her conviction that her father was sinking gradually ; in effect, he lived but a short time afterwards. On the day of his death, his usual kindness of manner returned : he was no longer peevish, but placid, resigned, as if he had obtained a glimpse of his place of rest beyond the grave. Mary, whose grief was not of that violent description which disturbs everybody and everything, but silent, deep, and enduring, was with him almost the whole of the day : he blessed and kissed her repeatedly ; while Mrs.

Fortescue's grief was so violent and hysterical, that she was unable to remain in the room; and I was far from questioning its sincerity, for at such a moment her want of feeling and her ingratitude must have been bitterly remembered. Mary and Mr. Templeton were in the room when he expired. The last audible word he uttered was the name of his son; and his hand was placed in that of his beloved daughter at the moment his kind, benevolent heart ceased to beat for ever.

## CHAPTER IX.

“ Noble he was, contemning all things mean ;  
His truth unquestioned, and his soul serene.”

CRABBE.

HOWEVER sincere our sorrow at the death of a beloved friend, there is necessarily but a short time given to the exclusive indulgence of it. Other thoughts soon mingle with our regret—the state and disposition of his worldly affairs are to be ascertained, and we become anxious or curious, according to circumstances.

Mr. Hunter had left less wealth, by many thousands, than was generally supposed; his disposition was not in the slightest degree tinged with avarice ; on the contrary, his charity was



unbounded. He was a liberal subscriber to many of the noble Institutions and Asylums of the Metropolis : not from vulgar ostentation, but because he knew their practical utility, and for the sake of example. It was, however, in acts of private benevolence that he delighted. From a few instances which came to my knowledge, I had long suspected that a large sum was annually expended in this way ; and after his death, his papers proved this to be the case : nor had he forgotten some of his old pensioners in his will. After the payment of a few legacies to his friends, and annuities to two or three of his old servants, his whole property was vested in trustees, who were directed to pay Mrs. Fortescue twelve hundred pounds annually for her life : the principal afterwards to be equally divided among her children ; and to Mary, the whole of the residue, as soon as she was of age, exclusive of the sum of five thousand pounds, which was to be paid to John, if he should ever return. Mr. Templeton, who had been in part-

nership with Mr. Hunter for more than a year, was one of the executors; and it gave me pleasure to see that the only feeling he now entertained for Mrs. Fortescue was that of indifference. As to her, notwithstanding my dislike, I thought I had never before seen her looking so well; I believe it was because her affectation had, in some measure, given way to remorse. This, however, was not long the case; the tenor of her father's will was not likely to give her satisfaction, although she was secured by it from that reverse of fortune which would most probably have been the consequence, had any sum, however large, been placed at her own absolute disposal; and her self-love was mortified at the striking preference shown to her sister, in the disposition of the property. It was not in her father's nature to be unforgiving; still he must have been more than human, to have entirely forgotten the perverseness of her conduct, which was so strongly contrasted with Mary's filial obedience. However, she made no

scruple of asserting that his mind had been biassed by those about him, and her dislike to Mr. Templeton, at whom principally her assertions were aimed, increased to hatred. I was now occasionally in company with her husband, whom, before I left England, I scarcely knew ; the tone of his conversation was not to my taste, —it was lively, but heartless ; and he took but little pains to conceal his libertine principles. Mr. Hunter had seen him ; for when he found there was no hope of his recovery, he was desirous to leave the world without being at enmity with any one, and accordingly sent for him. This circumstance had encouraged the hopes he had previously formed, but the contents of the will annihilated them ; he calculated upon his wife's receiving a few thousands, at least ; and after he discovered his mistake, invariably spoke of Mr. Hunter in a tone of disrespect and levity, which was disgusting to me, who so well knew his virtues. At the same time, I invariably exulted that Fortescue had not the

power to squander or gamble away any part of the property. He treated his wife, as might be expected, with cool and marked contempt—he had never been blind to her faults, and they now furnished him with an everlasting topic of ironical admiration, or biting sarcasm, whenever, which was not seldom, he chose to avail himself of it; whilst he continually launched forth in extravagant commendations of her sister's beauty and virtues, a subject which he justly conceived must be peculiarly disagreeable to her. Baffled and defeated in his designs, the bad man is pleased with the thought that revenge, of some kind or other, is always in his power; his heart overflows with this passion, and if restrained from violently breaking forth, it seeks to discharge itself by another channel, and finds an outlet in acts of petty malignity; or, in the "damnable iteration" of pointed and cutting remarks. Systematically pursued, this mode of venting our spite on those who have incurred it, is not to be despised—its safety is obvious—

we may speak daggers as often as we please ; whereas the use of one always provokes impertinent enquiries, and inconvenient notoriety—its facility is equally obvious ; from the polished smooth-tongued courtier, to the rude and brutal clown, all have the power of wreaking their revenge in this way ; and “ *cæteris paribus*,” it is of small consequence, whether the feelings are wounded by the contemptuous sneer of the former, or the abusive vulgarity of the latter. In domestic life, this indulgence is within our reach every day, nay, every hour ; and at the same time, with a little tact, we may sustain our character for kindness and benevolence, in the eyes of the world ; or at most, it is only said, “ there are faults on both sides.” To a woman endowed with a moderate degree of sensibility or spirit, this treatment from the man for whose sake she had deliberately braved the displeasure of a father, would have been insupportable ; and according as one or the other of these qualities predominated, she would either have been de-

pressed into silent dejection, or roused to angry recrimination. Mrs. Fortescue, however, seemed invulnerable to all the shafts of malice levelled at her by her husband; they glanced by her, or if they struck at all, the wound was only superficial; and while, for the most part, her behaviour evinced complete indifference, or insensibility to these attacks, still, the perverseness of her disposition often supplied her with means of offence, as annoying as his own: consequently, the gratification he expected to derive from this laudable source, if not entirely destroyed, was at least subject to considerable deduction.

From my own observation, during a stay of several weeks in London, I was strongly impressed with the opinion, that, notwithstanding there were two children, these heartless and selfish beings would not live together long; and this opinion was corroborated by Mr. Templeton, whose opportunities of knowing them had been so much greater than my own. Mary's love for her father had been sincere and un-

bounded, and her grief was too recent to receive any alleviation at present. From the contemplation of wealth, she was too unselfish to derive comfort ; time, alone, with its mellowing influence, could soothe her regret. An elderly lady, a cousin of her father's, came to reside with her ; for this lovely and interesting girl was left without a natural protector in the world, and with a fortune ample enough to excite the cupidity of the numerous suitors who would infallibly surround her. I was not surprised to discover, that she entertained a settled dislike for her sister's husband ; it could not be otherwise ; and Mr. Templeton's unobtrusive kindness of manner towards her, betrayed sometimes, I thought, symptoms of an incipient attachment. It might, however, proceed only from the warmth of his disposition, ever ready to sympathise with the distressed, and to console or relieve affliction to the utmost of his power.

## CHAPTER X.

"Great Heaven! how frail thy creature man is made,  
How by himself insensibly betrayed!"

PRIOR.

CHANGE of scene and society, during my absence from S——, had produced a serenity in my mind, which I was by no means apprehensive would be disturbed by the aspect of the familiar objects of my boyish remembrance. I was happier than I had ever expected to be; and as some trifling matters of business called me to S——, previously to my going abroad, I did not hesitate to go. On my arrival, however, I discovered that I had formed a very erroneous estimate of my fortitude—every object in the



neighbourhood of my house, was associated with fond and tender recollections of my mother; and in indulging these, there was a melancholy pleasure. But too many scenes recalled the hours passed with one whom I had ardently loved, but whom it was now a crime to think upon, except with feelings of indifference—and these were not yet mine. I ought not to have lingered—there was no society in the vicinity now, that I cared for; and the affairs which I pretended to fancy required my personal inspection, could just as well have been settled by letter. However, from day to day I loitered, and each day found some plausible pretence for delay. I was standing on the brink of an abyss, and soon the irrecoverable plunge was made.

The beauty of a summer's morning had tempted me to ramble, and I was walking in a shady lane, which bounded one of my fields, when, at a bend of the lane, I suddenly encountered Charles Wilson. I was not agreeably surprised;

but he, with all his usual frankness, extended his hand, which I took, with, I believe, a considerable degree of coolness.

“I’m devilish glad to see ye, Douglas,” he said; “I was on my way to your house—how you’re altered—you are much darker and thinner. I heard only yesterday you were come home—well, how are ye?”

“Why,” I said, “you are altered too; you have grown very stout.”

“Yes,” he replied; “hunting all day, and drinking all night, drive away care, my boy.”

“You are the same jovial fellow, I see, that you used to be,” I said; “you are not married, I suppose?”

“Damn matrimony,” he replied; “no matrimony for me! you know what the old song says, ‘A wife’s a tight shoe buckled on.’ No, no!—bachelor’s hall for me; besides, Margaret’s married, and one in the family’s enough. By-the-bye, now I think of it, you have not seen her husband—I’ll introduce you to him. Os-

borne's a devilish good fellow; you'll like him much."

"You forget," I replied, coolly; "I have seen him at your mother's."

"Ah!" he replied, in an altered tone; "my poor mother, she has been dead now twelve months, nearly. So you did—I was oblivious, as the Dominie says; but don't let us be melancholy." And resuming his former tone, he said, "You have been travelling about, and have seen a great deal of the world, I suppose—we seldom heard of you, and I dare say you had quite forgotten us—what glorious weather we have."

"Yes," I replied, "it is indeed fine weather."

"Well," he said, "now you're come back, you'll be one of us; if you're fond of shooting, you may have some sport to-morrow. Osborne and I are going out—I reckon myself a good shot; but Osborne's a d—d deal better—lots of birds this season—how warm it is!"

"You look warm," I said; "but I do not feel it particularly so."

“Oh!” said he, laughing; “you have not much flesh to carry: how many stone do ye think I weigh? guess—well, I’ll tell ye—twenty stone—it’s true, upon my honour; but,” he said, “I want you to dine with me to-day—nobody at all—bachelor’s party—only six jolly good fellows, and come you must.”

I refused at first, for I had not forgotten his behaviour to me when I was here last, and which, at that time, I regarded as a studied coolness, in omitting to call or write; now, however, I saw nothing in it but that carelessness of disposition which predominated in every thing he did, and which, in every day-life, so often gives pain to the feelings of others from very thoughtlessness. On that score, then, I acquitted him; and from the hearty frankness of his manner, I inferred that he was ignorant of my proposal, and its rejection, at the time when the worldly-minded Mrs. Wilson deemed the acquaintance with Mr. Osborne likely to be more advantageously ripened into relationship. In short,

the cordiality of his manner, and a wish to see the happy, the favoured Osborne, prevailed, and I accepted his invitation.

The party were punctual—two, only, strangers to me. Mr. Osborne did not recollect having met me before, but hoped he should see me at the Hall; he was not improved in appearance; his face was more rubicund, if not bloated, giving evident indications of his leading a life of intemperance: in bulk he was prodigiously increased, and his conversation partook more strongly of the jargon of the stable, and the kennel. I need not say the party, with the exception of myself, consisted of jolly dogs—in fact they were hard drinkers; they must have looked on me with a degree of contempt, for I found it impossible to keep pace with them, and made my escape as soon as I could; but not till I was completely disgusted with the conversation, and at the quantity of wine that was poured down the gullets of these thirsty souls, whose midnight orgies were only terminated by intoxication. I had not ex-

ected to find educated men of the present day habitually indulging in this vice, for such it still was, in my opinion, in spite of Mr. Crawford ; and that Charles, whose mercurial spirits required no stimulus, and who had always been so temperate in this respect, should find pleasure in it, was matter for surprise. To evade Mr. Osborne's importunity, I had given him a sort of half-promise, that I would dine at the Hall, before I left S——; and at the time I gave it, I intended to frame an excuse, to avoid going, as at this point I was determined. In the morning, however, a note in Margaret's handwriting was brought to me ; my heart beat quick at sight of the well-known hand, and an indefinable feeling pervaded my frame : strong symptoms, that I had not attained to that state of indifference of which I wished to persuade myself. She wrote by Mr. Osborne's desire, to invite me to dine with them on the following day, and expressed her hope that I would not disappoint them.

I thought the previous evening that my resolution was fixed ; but it began directly to waver. A mingled feeling of curiosity and vanity impelled me strongly to go. I wished to see if she were as happy as she would have been with me ; and I would show her that I was no longer the love-sick boy who thought life was not life without her, but a lively and cheerful man of the world, whose address was improved and manners polished by travelling ; and I began humming a lively tune to convince myself that I was unusually pleased ; in fact, I sang snatches of songs, or whistled at intervals, all day, but not exactly for “ want of thought.” I took up a book, but could not read ; and neither on that day nor the following could I fix my attention on any thing. As the hour of meeting approached, I felt a secret wish, which almost overpowered my curiosity, that I had stayed away from S—— altogether ; and although I strove to compose my feelings, yet when I saw her, when I heard her speak, I was much agi-

tated. I controlled my agitation, however, and made some common-place remark ; but my hand trembled as it touched hers. She said I had been from home a long time, and hoped I was not going to wander about the world again ; spoke of her mother, who had died rather suddenly, after an illness of short duration. I detected a momentary consciousness and embarrassment as she began to speak ; but it might not have been visible to others, and certainly was not to Mr. Osborne. At table I sat next to her, and had ample opportunity for observation : her figure was more beautiful than when I last saw her—it was more developed and rounded ; but her face showed traces of anxiety, and her brow was sometimes clouded ; while a fretfulness of manner would occasionally betray itself when spoken to by her husband, to whom she addressed herself as seldom and as briefly as possible. All this my lynx-eyed vigilance discovered ; and the inference was obvious—she was unhappy. For a moment, and only a moment, I exulted ;



but mine was not a revengeful nature, and that feeling soon disappeared. She said she knew I should soon be tired of the company of wine-bibbers, and that she wished to chat with me at coffee.

Our party was almost the same I had met two days before, and of course a second edition of the "Table Talk" was to be expected; and I soon found that I was a marked man, and that these votaries of Bacchus doomed me to expiate my previous flinching, by being challenged and charged till I was "hors de combat." I was on my guard to baulk them, however; and by a manœuvre, in the midst of a most uproarious shout at some devilish good thing uttered by Mr. Osborne, effected my retreat in good order. I found Mrs. Osborne and an agreeable girl, a cousin of her husband's, and of the same name, in the drawing-room. Our conversation was on general topics at first. Miss Osborne commenced playing an overture of Mozart's.

"We heard you were engaged to Miss Mary

Hunter before you went abroad; was that true?" said Mrs. Osborne.

"No," I replied, "it was not."

"Is she handsome?" she asked.

"She is a lovely girl," I replied; "and of amiable disposition."

"Lovely and amiable!" she said; "there is only one more qualification required, and since her father's death she possesses that, of course? Has she a fortune?"

"She will have," I answered, "when of age; of which she wants three years."

"Now do tell me," she asked, with I thought affected gaiety, "is she fair or dark?—tall or short?"

"She is," I said, "not so tall as yourself; her complexion is fair, without much colour; she has blue eyes and brown hair."

"Blue eyes and auburn hair!" she exclaimed; "an insipid beauty—at least you used to think so. Your taste is altered now, I suspect."

"Her eyes are not light blue," I replied,

“ but of a deep expressive colour ; neither is her hair auburn, but a rich and luxuriant brown.”

“ You are captivated,” she said, “ I can perceive ; “ but do you think me altered ?”

“ Your figure is improved,” I replied ; “ but your face is thinner, and more pale.”

“ Ah !” she said. “ My poor mother—had she lived——” She paused, sighed deeply, and for a moment seemed irresolute ; she coloured, and then proceeded :—“ My mother and Charles were always speaking in terms of praise of Mr. Osborne ; indeed, I never knew my mother to be so strongly prepossessed in any one’s favour. He was handsome, good-humoured, and liberal ; and making due allowance for his devotion to field sports, I believe he was attached to me. I naturally imagined that I should have influence enough to wean him from the bottle, and we were married.” She paused—I could not speak ; she resumed :—“ For some time after our marriage, he in some measure changed his previous habits,

and gave up two or three evenings in the week to me ; but the sacrifice was too great to be persevered in. Habits of intemperance began to regain the ascendancy ; and before my mother died, she saw reason to fear that her prepossessions had misled her judgment. Since her death Mr. Osborne has gone on in an aggravated career of excess ; and Charles, I regret to say, is too much like him in that respect. You have seen, and can form an opinion of his companions : he is never happy but with them, and expects that I can feel satisfaction in the society of wretches whom I despise, and whose conversation and mode of passing time, shows how much they prefer the company of their horses and their dogs, and the pleasure of drinking, to female society."

Her eyes sparkled, her cheeks glowed with indignation. Could I be surprised ? However, Miss Osborne ceased playing, and for the remainder of the evening the subject was not resumed. On my walk home I meditated on

what I had heard. I could not conceal from myself that there was a want of propriety, perhaps of delicacy, in Margaret's conversation on the subject of her husband's faults; but my heart found a ready excuse for her. We had been friends from childhood, and she had spoken to me as to a brother; as, in fact, she would have spoken to Charles, but that his and Osborne's were kindred spirits, and from him she could not expect sympathy; his affection for his sister was not diminished, but its character was less delicate and refined.

## CHAPTER XI.

“ His blood is caked, 'tis cold, it seldom flows,  
’Tis lack of kindly warmth.”

TIMON.

THE day after my conversation with Mr. Osborne, I had been consulting Mr. Jackson (whom I have mentioned before) about a projected improvement on my estate; and on my return overtook a gentleman of the name of Ridley, and after the usual salutations, accompanied him towards his house, in which direction he was going.

“ Well, Mr. Douglas,” he said, “ are you come to fix yourself here, or are you going to leave S—— again?”

“ I shall leave S—— for Italy in a few days, Mr. Ridley,” I replied.

“ I once thought of making a permanent residence in some part of Italy myself,” he said ; “ the climate is beautiful—perhaps I may yet do so ; for after all the money I have laid out, and continue to lay out, I am by no means pleased with my house and grounds—it is but a poor place.”

“ Most persons, and I among them, think very differently,” I said.

“ Why,” he replied, “ nothing that money could purchase has been omitted to make the place tolerable ; that is my plan—I care not for money. I never debar myself from any gratification or luxury that I feel a wish for, because it is expensive. Life is to be enjoyed, and I do enjoy it.”

“ Well,” I said, “ Mr. Ridley, at all events, in spending your money you have the satisfaction of knowing you give employment to others.”

“ Oh, my dear sir !” he replied, “ that is no motive with me. I do not think about others :

it is my own ease and enjoyment I study ; and as to that satisfaction you speak of, and which some people will tell you they have experienced, believe me it is all cant and hypocrisy.”

While we were talking, a young creature, with tattered garments and care-worn face, leading a barefooted child, with another at her back, solicited alms.

“ Woman,” he said, “ get work, and do not let me see you here again. Where’s your husband, if you’ve got one ?”

“ My husband died last week,” she said, sobbing ; “ and I can’t get work, sir.”

“ Well,” he said, “ you must not beg here ; so tramp away directly.”

As soon as she was gone—“ Now, Mr. Douglas,” he said, “ that’s what I never do. I never relieve vagrants—and upon principle. I object to give them relief. This woman, there is no doubt, was an impostor. I do not believe she ever had a husband ; and, besides, admitting all she has said to be true, what have I to do with



that? She did not marry nor have children to please me—it was to please herself; and you may depend upon it, her husband was some drunken, lazy fellow, who would not work when he could get it. I know what they are—every one can get work.”

“ I doubt that much,” I said.

“ No,” he replied, “ there is no doubt; where they fail, there is some fault or other on their part—their character is bad. Giving money is only an encouragement to idleness and lying; and subscribing to public institutions is very little better—so I do neither. That ignorant clown, Jackson, I have no doubt, sent that woman towards my house. I really believe he often does send vagrants to me, because he knows it annoys me. If he chooses to give anything, he might be satisfied with that, I should think; but he’s always meddling about something or other that does not concern him, with his oaths and bad language.”

We were now near his house, and he invited

me to look at an alteration that was being made; but I refused, and left him.

Mr. Ridley had been many years in India, where he acquired a fortune. On his return to England, he purchased an estate at S——, and had lived there five or six years. His house was not large, nor were the grounds extensive; but the site of the former was excellent, and the natural advantages of the latter had been so much assisted by art and taste, as to render it, on the whole, a delightful residence, and far superior to any in its neighbourhood. He was an old bachelor,—the antipodes to a miser in everything that regarded his own enjoyment. On his table were spread the most expensive delicacies, and his cellars were filled with the choicest wines; but the veriest miser that ever existed could not shut his bowels of compassion more effectually to the misery and sufferings of others. It was the same with respect to his household. His servants, and others whom he employed, received good wages as long as they

were able to work ; but illness, or any accident disabling them, or requiring only a moderate share of indulgence, was a sufficient reason for immediate dismissal. The only relation he had, was a brother living in London, a poor tradesman, who struggled hard to maintain a large family. With him, however, he had been at variance for years, for some trumpery reason or other—some “trifle light as air ;” and at the age of sixty, he had invested all his fortune, with the exception of a few hundreds, in the purchase of a life annuity upon his own precious existence. Selfishness exists in the hearts of all human beings ; but there are few, indeed, in which it is not mitigated by the domestic or social affections, or by religious considerations. Mr. Ridley’s was the essence of selfishness ; and at least he was free from the vice of hypocrisy, for he never attempted to disguise, or even to palliate it ; unlike the generality of men, who, although they are imbued with it in a much slighter degree, are yet restrained from

open profession by motives of prudence or shame. As to religion, I believe Mr. Ridley had none; and Jackson, who hated him from the bottom of his heart, said, "That he neither believed in God nor Devil; he was like the rich man who fared sumptuously every day, and wouldn't relieve the beggar at his gate. Why, he'd see his flesh and blood in want, and wouldn't relieve em. D'ye think if I'd a brother in distress, that I'd suffer him and his young uns to be crying, and pining, and breaking their hearts, if I could prevent it? I'd lose my right arm afore I'd be such an unnatural brute. I expect he'll be choked some day with his good things, and sarve him right too, a d——d hard-hearted rascal!"

Mr. Jackson and he had been friends, but for a very short time—it was impossible they could agree; and as one was just as open in speaking his mind as the other, they quarrelled on some occasion, and the blunt old farmer abused him in the most unmeasured terms; and since then

he never mentioned his name without tacking to it some wish, not of the most benevolent kind, or perhaps a threat. Sometimes he wished "He'd got a brimstone of a wife to plague him ; but then, perhaps, there would have been children, and God forbid the breed should be kept up ;" or " he knowed no man he should like to give a licking to so well as old yellow-liver ;" and he swore " he'd set a large dog at him if he came within a few yards of the farm."

## CHAPTER XII.

“ Many and sharp the num’rous ills  
Inwoven with our frame ;  
More pointed still, we make ourselves  
Regret, Remorse, and Shame.”

BURNS.

WITH that infatuation which generally possesses us when we are about to plunge into crime or ruin, and which makes our apprehension blind and dull to consequences, and utterly heedless of the voice of even our own experience, which would sometimes offer salutary warnings, did we but care to listen, I continued at S——. I was like a man, who, absorbed in admiration of the verdant and beautiful scenery on the banks of the river, and forgetful of everything

but the indolent enjoyment of the present hour, heedlessly and supinely suffers his bark to glide on the smooth and gentle surface of the stream ; while a treacherous current, imperceptibly increasing in rapidity, is hurrying him to the brink of the cataract, where no human power can save him.

I again met Mrs. Osborne, and again listened to that voice which had once been to me the sweetest music ; on whose accents I had dwelt with that pure and impassioned feeling only known in youth, when innocence and hope unite, and love is sanctified and elevated above the sordid or sensual passion of our after life. I listened—alas ! the spell I had ~~once~~ broken was again upon me—I was once more enchanted by the bewitching eloquence of her eyes and voice, and I thought no longer of flight.

Mr. Osborne was hospitable ; in fact, his hospitality degenerated into profusion and extravagance ; in fortune, he was considerably superior, and in abilities equal, to most of his associates : he could sing an excellent bacchanalian song,

and he could drink more wine at one bout than any one of them ; and this last qualification was regarded with unfeigned admiration by inferior capacities. His wealth, however, and his mode of spending it, gave him an ascendancy among them, which, in better society, would have been refused to him, unless supported by moral worth, or by higher abilities than he possessed. He was perfectly satisfied with this, however, for he had no higher ambition ; and he was as much pleased with the noisy applause which followed almost everything he said, as men of a different mind would have been with the homage rendered to their virtues or their talents. He was, in the main, good-humoured, except when weather, or some untoward circumstance, spoiled the day's sport ; when his temper would be rather out of order for that day, until he had swallowed a bottle or two of wine, which was his sovereign remedy in all cases of vexation and disappointment. There is an intuitive delicacy of mind, which is independent of extrinsic cir-



cumstances, and which is often wanting where rank, and wealth, and education combine, and where conventional politeness is a curtain to the indulgence of gross and selfish feelings ; and which, on the other hand, sometimes exists where hardship, and poverty, and ignorance conspire, and fail to harden the heart, or totally to destroy its finer feelings. This delicacy of mind shrinks not merely from coarsely or intentionally wounding the sensibility of those we love or esteem ; but anxiously seeks to heal a slight or accidental wound, and endeavours to efface its impression by tender assiduity. It induces us to abandon, without hesitation, those vices or follies, which, however agreeable to us, are sources of pain and uneasiness to them ; and in contributing to their comfort and amusement, we feel a satisfaction which fully compensates for our self-denial.

Of this degree of delicacy Mr. Osborne was as destitute as Shylock was of mercy ; and as he was not actually unkind to his wife, as her time

was almost entirely at her own disposal, and as she was never restricted in the matter of money, —that infallible panacea with vulgar minds for all “the ills that flesh is heir to,” —he could not discover rational grounds for dissatisfaction. He had admired her, but he never could have appreciated justly the classical contour of her face, and the surpassing elegance of her figure ; for beauty of the highest order requires in its admirers a certain intellectual refinement before it can be fully understood ; for the same reason, still less is it probable, that her virtues and accomplishments had ever been regarded by him in any other view than as objects of merely secondary consideration. Be this as it may, however, by maternal tact and skilful management, his admiration was turned to the best account, and resulted in matrimony. With reluctance, at intervals, and only for a short time, his favourite pursuits were neglected for his wife’s society ; but as the novelty wore off, home became irksome to him, unless he was surrounded by boon companions,

“ who echoed every jest with obstreperous approbation, and countenanced every frolic with vociferations of applause.” Now he hunted, and shot, and drank with redoubled ardour, and his devotion seemed daily to increase ; and had I not witnessed it, I should have conceived it impossible for any man to have possessed such insensibility as to neglect habitually, and almost entirely, the attractions of so lovely a woman, for the ribald conversation of noisy intemperance. The more frequently I saw Mrs. Osborne, the more I envied him the possession of a treasure, whose value he knew not ; and as my conviction daily strengthened, that my happiness would have been perfect, but for him, hatred rankled in my breast. To do him justice, he seemed incapable of harbouring jealousy ; so far from my conversations with his wife exciting it, in any degree, he rather seemed pleased with my attention to her ; for, as her ennui and discontent were diminished, in some measure, by conversation, he was more at liberty to pursue his amuse-

ments, and less exposed to be molested by remonstrance. I do not wish to dwell on this part of my story, for the sequel may be guessed. His invitations were repeated and pressing—he was more than ever absent from home. Margaret and I talked of happy days gone by; old associations revived; she was lovely and unhappy, and I loved her with all the fervour of my early attachment. Alas! as we approach near to the vortex of crime, how rapidly and violently it whirls and makes giddy our faculties of reason and reflection!

There needed but little persuasion to induce her to elope with me. Mr. Osborne was dining some miles from home, and was not to return till the next day. Margaret pretended illness, and retired early to her chamber. I met her at the appointed place, led her to a carriage which was in waiting, and as she was not missed for some hours, all pursuit was vain. Paris was the place of our destination. We soon arrived there, and in the enjoyment of unhallowed passion, I endea-

voured to persuade myself I was happy. Poets may sing, and novel writers may expatiate, in glowing language, on the exquisite pleasure of mutual though criminal attachment, when their hearts beat in unison, and lovers are all to the world to each other. This is all very beautiful but in my own case I did not experience it.

At the moment of leaving the Hall, when we were seated in the carriage, and Margaret was encircled by my arms, I was not happy. Fear and remorse began slowly to arise ; and even at the " meridian height " of my felicity,

" Grief waited like a shade ;"

and soon

" The dwarfish shadow to a giant grew."

### CHAPTER XIII.

“ *Beverley*. But I was born to infamy—I’ll tell thee what the world says ; it calls me villain, a treacherous husband, a cruel father, a false brother, lost to nature and her charities ; to say all in one short word, it calls me—Gamester.”

THE GAMESTER.

“ Guilt is the source of sorrow—’tis the fiend,  
Th’ avenging fiend, that follows us behind  
With whips and stings.”

Rowe.

ALL guilty connexions are sooner or later accompanied by remorse ; and it generally happens that the dissatisfaction we feel on reviewing our conduct, instead of being restricted to its proper object, leads us to discover real or imaginary imperfections, where none appeared to exist before, and to attribute to the partner of our

crime, a share of guilt far greater than our own. Whether this was the case, or whether possession had withdrawn the veil which love had spread before my eyes, or whether, as is most likely, both these causes operated, I know not; but on more intimate acquaintance with Margaret's modes of thinking and acting, I was pained to discover that vanity was a main ingredient in her disposition; together with a levity, I might rather say heartlessness, of which I never could have imagined this goddess of my youthful idolatry capable. At the time our acquaintance commenced we were children; I early acquired the habit of looking at her with admiration. This grew with my growth, till it became love of the most ardent description. My eyes were so dazzled with her charms, that they were incapable of detecting any speck—she seemed to me all-perfect. Since that time, however, the sphere of my vision was enlarged; I had met with women lovely, accomplished, and amiable. My mental optics saw more clearly, and invidious

comparisons suggested themselves. I often detected myself involuntarily comparing Margaret with Mary Hunter ; and although the latter was certainly not her equal in personal qualifications, yet in the higher, and more enduring charms of the mind, she was far superior : witness her untiring solicitude for her dying father ; her grief for her brother ; and her uniform kindness and gentleness to all around her. I endeavoured to avoid instituting such detrimental comparisons ; but they would obtrude themselves like importunate beggars on my notice, and on the most trivial occasions ; and the more I determined to resist, the more pertinaciously they assailed. Yet I attributed the existence of these failings in Margaret, to the cruel and unfeeling conduct of Mr. Osborne—neglected by him, as she had been, it was not surprising, that the delicate and generous feelings of her mind were warped and contracted—that the sterling gold was deteriorated by its admixture with baser metal. Her earliest affection, till now undi-



vulged, had been mine—overcome by the importunity of her mother, who would never hear me alluded to except in terms of disparagement, and who urged her to accept Mr. Osborne's proposal, as Margaret, in the event of her death, would be left entirely dependent on her brother—teased by Charles's incessant eulogiums on his friend—perhaps also dazzled by the prospect of affluence, and its train of advantages—and pleased with the personal qualifications and assiduities of Mr. Osborne, she consented to become his wife. There was also the report of my engagement to Miss Hunter. Mr. Osborne's conduct, subsequently to the marriage, spread a chilling blight on those opening affections which a husband's tenderness would have caused to ripen and expand, instead of withering with premature decay.

Our attachment was, I believed, mutual and sincere, but it was unholy and criminal; this reflection was almost always present with me, and it must sometimes, at least, have occurred

with bitterness to Margaret: to dissipate thoughts of this nature, she might find frivolous and light pursuits the most effectual. Perhaps, too, I was mistaken in supposing this degree of levity and vanity to be out of place; they were consistent with her present position in society, and were the natural offspring of such a connection as ours; besides, I, of all men, had no right to be fastidious on the subject—but for me, her reputation would have been unsullied—but for me, she would never have been a mark for the finger of scorn to point at. In this manner I endeavoured to silence my misgivings, with respect to Margaret's failings, but not always with success; however, we mingled a great deal in gay society, and partook of the various pleasures and amusements that Paris afforded. I had renewed my acquaintance with Dubois, and as Margaret found as great pleasure in his company as I did, we became extremely intimate.

Among other modes of passing time, I joined the dupes of chance, and occasionally gambled,

and other thoughts were stifled in the excitement of this seducing and pernicious vice. So true it is, that after the first step in crime, all others are comparatively easy. Although at first I risked but little, for my funds would not permit me to play high, yet I sometimes lost more than I could conveniently spare ; and as Margaret every day became more extravagant and fond of dress, it sometimes happened, that I had not the means at hand to gratify her propensity ; and as, whenever this was the case, her temper was invariably ruffled, I seemed to myself obliged, as it were, again to have recourse to the gaming-table, with the hope of retrieving my previous losses ; and thus I was furnished with an additional motive for perseverance. At Dubois's apartments, I one evening met an Englishman, named Nevill; he was about six-and-twenty, of swarthy complexion, slight made, and well bred, and had not been many days in Paris. We left together, I for the Palais Royal, and he on his way home, which was in the same direc-

tion. As we walked, I learned that he had never in his life been in a gaming-house, and pressed him to accompany me, which he did. He played, and won a small sum—from this evening he became an ardent votary, and I was continually meeting him at one or another of these infernal dens. Some weeks after this, I was at a gaming-house, at which I often played, when Mr. Nevill came in—I challenged him to play, and he consented. At first our stakes were limited to small sums, but we increased them, as we went on, till they were considerably higher ; fortune was for some time tolerably impartial, but the tide soon flowed towards me, and continued to do so, the remainder of the evening. Mr. Nevill had borne his reverse for some time, with apparent philosophy ; but as the run continued against him, his countenance assumed that anxious, livid look, that spoke of inward anguish more eloquently than words could have done. At length, he set his teeth firmly together, and whispering a curse, left the room.

Flushed with success, I saw, but scarcely heeded his distress; for such is the property of vice, that it deadens our sympathy, even for the sufferings of which we are the authors. I followed him almost immediately, for I had stayed later than I was accustomed to do, and had gone but a few paces from the door, when I was startled by the report of a pistol, a little in advance of me. I ran forward—a man was lying on the ground—his dress resembled Mr. Nevill's, and as that thought flashed on my mind, I stooped to assist in raising him, but I trembled with apprehension to that degree, that I could hardly stand. Alas! my fears were horribly confirmed. Disfigured and bloody as his features were, I could recognise them—they were those of my victim—life was extinct—he had shot himself through the head. I staggered to the wall, against which I leaned for support—a deadly, sickly feeling came over me—I knew nothing more—I thought I saw the corpse borne away, but I had no recollection of how I

got home. However, at home I was—pale and conscience-stricken, with perspiration on my brow, and blood on my clothes, I must have resembled a murderer, and Margaret might well be supposed dreadfully alarmed. To my astonishment, she did not regard it with horror at all comparable to mine, as in broken, hollow accents, I endeavoured to describe the awful scene, and execrated myself as his destroyer. He had a lovely wife, and two children with him at Paris; she was too well aware of his newly acquired fondness for play, and had used every argument in the power of a wife, to withdraw him from the whirlpool into which he was plunging. She had at last, she believed, succeeded, as he had given her a promise not to play again, and they were to leave Paris in three or four days. On the fatal day, he had been dejected and reserved, and his thoughts brooded on some melancholy subject. He left home, maddened, as it would seem, with reflecting on his losses, which amounted to a large

sum ; and with desperate anticipation of the worst, bought the weapon with which he destroyed himself, after having, with the unaccountable and common fatuity of the gamester, and perhaps urged by that almost irresistible impulse with which fortune often goads us to destruction, risked and lost his all.

The dreadful intelligence was communicated to his wife ; her reason was unsettled for some time ; however, she recovered her senses. I did not know her, but she was highly respected by those who did—a subscription was opened by her friends, to which I contributed more than the amount of my winnings from him ; and in after life, it gave me pleasure to know that she had exerted herself for the sake of her children, and that the lenient hand of time had soothed her affliction. Oh cursed sordid passion!—base spirit of gain—compound of folly and avarice—which levels all distinction for the time—which loosens the dearest ties of affection, and makes

existence itself depend on a throw of the dice, or the turn of a card! How black is the catalogue of madness, ruin, and despair, of which gaming has been the prolific source !



## CHAPTER XIV.

“ One lover to another still succeeds;  
Another and another after that,  
And the last fool is welcome as the former.”

Rowe.

I FELT wounded at the little sensibility evinced by Margaret at this catastrophe, and at the evanescent nature of that little—her levity enabled her soon to dismiss all thought about it; while for a long time afterwards, my waking thoughts dwelt upon the scene, and my dreams vividly renewed the impression. This want of sympathy considerably increased that estrangement between us, which had gradually sprung up, from differences on trifling subjects. Soon after our arrival in France, Margaret had adopt-

ed the practice of wearing rouge, a practice which I detested most unfeignedly ; and as she had what I considered a sufficient degree of natural colour, I could not for my life see any cause for its adoption. I therefore remonstrated strongly against it, and for a short time it was discontinued. I could not, however, maintain my point, and, for the sake of avoiding constant altercation, gave it up, as wiser men have done ; and henceforth, Margaret was never in company without wearing it. This may seem trifling ; but domestic life is made up of trifles, and it indicated too well the want of congeniality between our tastes. Her society, which had once been so delightful to me, had now lost much of its attraction, and I sought other company ; in fact, I seemed to myself so much altered in every respect, that I could almost have believed that I had undergone some change, analogous to the metempsychosis of the ancients, and that another soul inhabited my body. When I first heard of Mr. Osborne, I was almost distracted

at the bare possibility of her accepting him ; and when I knew that she had resolved to become his wife, I was brought almost to the verge of the grave—now, if I saw her surrounded by, and listening to the adulation of all the fops and coxcombs of Paris, I never experienced the slightest uneasiness ; and although she never seemed so happy as when receiving this sort of homage, so agreeable to her taste, yet the pangs of jealousy were entirely strangers to my breast. Such is the inconsistency of the human heart—so little do we know of ourselves. I, who thought her husband unfeeling and insensible, now followed in the same track, and left her repeatedly to her own resources for amusement ; and as Dubois was more than ever a favourite, I felt (like Mr. Osborne) under obligations to him, or indeed any one, who would give a portion of his time and conversation to amuse her in my absence, so that I might be spared her coldness or reproaches on my return,—for her nature was no longer of that gentle,

uncomplaining sort, which bears neglect without a murmur, and pines in silent grief.

We had now been some months in Paris; among other disagreeable circumstances, I had lost the friendship of my valued friend, Mr. Templeton; our correspondence had ceased entirely, and shame had prevented any attempt on my part to renew it. The only letters I had received from London, were on business, and communicated the expected, but unpleasant information, that Mr. Osborne had brought his action against me, for the seduction of his wife; and I now learned that the damages, which had been laid at five thousand, were reduced to two thousand pounds; and that he was taking the requisite legal steps, to procure an immediate divorce. I forwarded to my solicitor the powers necessary to enable him to raise the money; and strove to banish the bitter and humiliating thoughts which tormented me, by a more ardent devotion to drinking, which was become my exclusive passion (for after Mr. Nevill's melan-

choly death I had forsworn play); and the dawn of morning often saw me on my way home from some midnight debauch. On one of these mornings (how well I remember it), the wind blew cold, and rain and sleet were falling thick; I was proceeding homeward, in a state of high good humour, not far removed from intoxication. On my arrival at home, my drowsy servant opened the door, and rubbing her eyes, extended them to a stare at seeing me alone, and enquired for her mistress.

“What,” I said, “your mistress!—is she not in bed!” and strange surmises floated in my brain.

“No, sir,” the girl replied; “she left home yesterday evening, to go to Mme. La Roche, where she expected you would meet her.”

I was thunderstruck; nothing had been mentioned to me about Mme. La Roche, or meeting her there. Mme. La Roche was a woman of fascinating manners, and lived under the protection of a gay and wealthy Frenchman. We

were introduced to her by Dubois; and as Margaret was excluded from the society of women of reputation, by the conventional forms of the world, and as she would have been wretched without society, my objections to the acquaintance, which at first were very strong, gave way—her animation and vivacity made her an especial favourite with Margaret, to whom her parties were delightful. With a strange bewilderment of thoughts, which I could not bring into coherence, but with a kind of secret foreboding, I ran to Mme. La Roche's house — after much difficulty I succeeded in rousing one of the domestics, grumbling at being disturbed at such an unseasonable hour; however, in a loud voice I insisted upon seeing his mistress. The man, who knew me, was evidently apprehensive of violence, and no doubt my demeanour fully justified his apprehension, for after the wine I had swallowed, the unexpected excitement had elevated me not to intoxication, but rather to frenzy; and indeed my enquiry of itself was enough to

denote something akin to insanity. She could not be seen at such an hour—that was impossible, he said, but she would be visible at noon. I then gave him money, and asked if Mrs. Douglas had been there the previous evening—he believed she had. At what hour did she leave?—he did not know—cursing his stupidity, I flew home again, asked my servant the same question fifty times, and then quarrelled with her. I threw myself on my bed, to rest my aching head, and still more aching heart—there was no rest—my temples throbbed—my lips were parched—my mind was chaos. I rose, threw off my coat, bathed my burning brow and temples repeatedly with water ; again lay down, and at last obtained a brief respite from my troubles. In the morning, as soon as I thought it probable I might see Madame La Roche, I prepared for my visit. My frenzy had subsided, and was succeeded by a dejection of spirits that was hardly endurable—I wept like a woman, tears such as flow from grief and remorse. I saw Mme. La

Roche—Margaret had been there, surrounded as usual by admirers; but she complained of illness, and left early, escorted by Dubois—and this was all the intelligence I could glean from her; with all my pertinacity in questioning, I could not determine whether she had aided the intrigue or not; the easy nonchalance with which she answered my enquiries indicated nothing; but I left her house strongly impressed with the belief, that she knew much more on the subject than she chose to reveal. I went in search of Dubois—he had unexpectedly left Paris the evening before: they knew not whither he was gone, and the time of his return was quite uncertain. This was enough—she was gone.

It had been a source of dissatisfaction to me to discover how wrong an estimate I had formed of Margaret, and to feel that my love for her was diminished; and it was from the endeavour to alleviate this dissatisfaction, that my acquired tastes for gambling and drinking originated.



But, although I left her for these amusements, she was not much alone, and I believed that she was not unhappy; but in the flatteries and attentions of others, found more than compensation for my absence. For so abrupt a termination of our connection, I was totally unprepared; for on my side there was still the recollection of that tender, that passionate love, which had once been the charm of existence—a recollection which would have survived love itself, and would have formed a bond of union between us, which I thought would never have been voluntarily broken by me. Perhaps I was mistaken—perhaps even the legal sanction of our connection (for our marriage was determined upon,) might have failed to cement our union; it might only have linked us together till indifference grew to dislike, and ended in separation by consent. It was worse than idle to give way to these speculations—whatever tie of love, or recollections of the past, united us hitherto, that tie was abruptly and eternally

evered ; and I looked forward, with sorrowful foreboding, to the too probable bitterness and degradation of her future life : for I knew enough of Dubois to feel convinced that their connection would last but a short time. He was volatile and fickle—ever on the wing in pursuit of enjoyment and variety ; pleasure was his idol, and he worshipped her openly, but little restrained by considerations of principle or prudence. He would become tired of her, and she would be cast off, “a prey to fortune,” sinking lower in the scale of degradation, till—but my imagination recoiled from the horrid anticipation ; and bitter pangs of heartfelt remorse shot through me, as I recollected that on my head rested the guilt, degradation, ruin and infamy of her career ; and that I must appear at the tribunal of another world, where a fearful account was registered against me.

I was sick to the heart of Paris. Friends I had none, although a host of acquaintance ; and

anxious to evade the observations of which I should be, or fancied I should be the topic, with impaired health, and shattered nerves, I took my departure.

## CHAPTER XV.

“ Still to ourselves in every place consign'd,  
Our own felicity we make or find ;  
With secret course, which no loud storms annoy,  
Glides the smooth current of domestic joy.”

GOLDSMITH.

I DID not return to England for nearly four years after the preceding occurrences, which time was occupied in travelling through the greater part of Europe. I made a stay at most of the principal towns ; indeed, wherever I found anything to interest or amuse ; and when the country was particularly beautiful, I almost always travelled on foot ; and as I was a good pedestrian, I found more enjoyment in this mode of travelling than any other, as there were many of nature's

grandest scenes, which would have escaped my observation altogether, had I adopted any other mode of conveyance. The variety of character and costume, together with the natural beauties characteristic of the scenery of different countries, had furnished me with topics of cheerful contemplation, and had extracted the bitter sting of those reflections, arising from the remembrance of past events ; and my thoughts, when turned that way, were no longer of that gloomy hue which tinged everything in life with its own colour. Time had dulled the vividness of those impressions, although they were too deeply graven ever to be entirely obliterated ; and I was a serious, but not a melancholy, man. As I landed at Dover, however, and particularly as I approached London, my thoughts travelled back to past scenes and events. Home—there is magic even in the name, associated as it usually is with endearing recollections and tender welcome, with smiles of hope and tears of joy. I had no home—I had not even a friend, whose

countenance would glow with pleasure, or whose voice would bid me welcome on my return. I envied the poorest cottager, whose home, though never so homely, was made dear to him by affection. I yearned for love, for friendship, for sympathy; and amongst the innumerable ramifications of domestic affection, of friendly regard, and of social attachment, which pervade society, I seemed like a wretch doomed to starve in the midst of plenty. I experienced that sinking of the spirits which might be expected to follow these considerations; till the noise and confusion of London roused me from my reverie, and gave birth to other reflections.

In spite of some little repugnance, I had almost made up my mind to call upon Mr. Templeton, as I had always entertained a sincere regard for him; and however inconsistent with his manly and honourable principles my conduct might have been, he could not view it in a worse light than I did myself; when, one morning, a few days after my arrival, I unexpectedly met Mr.

Ridley. After mutual recognitions, "Mr.—  
Douglas," he said, "have you a vote at the India House?"

"No, Mr. Ridley," I replied.

"I am sorry for it," he said; "but at least —  
you have some interest in the city; and if you  
will do what you can for my friend, Mr. Ebenezer  
Indigo, I shall be much obliged."

"You forget," I replied, "that I have been  
away nearly five years; but I am very much  
surprised to see you take such active interest  
in this election."

"You are, I dare say," he replied; "you  
think it inconsistent with my practice to prefer  
trouble to pleasure—perhaps it is; but there is  
no rule without an exception. Forty years ago  
Mr. Indigo and I were acquainted at Calcutta,  
when he was not worth five hundred pounds—  
he has been a prosperous man, and is now worth  
half a million of money—he is an old man, and  
a bachelor—he has relations, I believe, but he  
does not own them; and—and—he can't take

his money with him. But," he said, "are you going down to S——?"

"No," I replied, "I think not; at least, if I do, I shall not stay there any time. How's your old friend Jackson?"

"A greater cur than ever," he replied. "I hate the vulgar fellow; and since he bought so much of Wilson's property, he is worse than ever."

"What do you mean?" I said; "Charles Wilson, is he dead?"

"No," he replied; "at least we do not know that he is; but after his sister's elopement he had a severe illness, brought on by grief, as it was said; for my own part, I have very little faith in these delicate feelings. When he recovered, he sold his estate and came to London; but I believe no one knows where he is, or even whether he is alive or dead. You made some noise at S—— at that time. However, Osborne, like a wise man, soon found means to console himself; for as soon afterwards as he could, he



married a pretty-looking girl, his gamekeeper's daughter, I believe ; and to save time, she had a child by him beforehand ; while the only effect grief had upon his delicate feelings, outwardly at least, was to make him drink more deeply. At all events, he was no hypocrite."

" And has no one at S—— seen or heard of Mr. Wilson since then ?" I asked.

" No," he replied ; " and whether he went abroad, or only into some distant part of the country, was never known."

After this conversation, Mr. Ridley rather abruptly took his leave, on the plea of business, but promised to see me again. The friend for whom this heartless being was canvassing, was, I learned afterwards, only six or seven years older than himself ; yet he spoke of him as the old man, and looked forward to the event of his death as a contingency from which he might derive benefit ; and it was this anticipation, and not any motive of friendship merely, (to *that* he was impervious,) that explained such an un-

usual circumstance as his coming to town, and exerting himself actively for his friend. Common as it is, there is something unnatural in the calculating foresight with which men in youth or middle age, anticipate the death of others, whose wealth they expect to share ; but it is doubly so when men in the decline of life, from the same motive, speculate coolly on the death of friends only a few years older, perhaps not older, than themselves ; and whom, if they survive, it can be only for a brief span. But such is the world ;—pleasure in youth, and interest in after life, are the mainsprings which chiefly give activity to the human machine.

In Mr. Osborne's conduct I saw nothing inconsistent : his love for Margaret, if he ever had any, was pretty well at an end before ; and the connexion he had formed was more likely to be suitable to his taste. As to the girl, I remembered her ; she had been lady's maid to Margaret for a short time,—a rosy-cheeked, saucy-looking wench, now exalted to be mistress of the Hall.

I was more surprised to hear that Charles Wilson had felt the disgrace incurred by his sister's elopement, so acutely, as to have adopted the resolution of parting with his estate, and leaving the neighbourhood to which he was so much attached. Indeed, I did not think his sensibility was of that nature to retain disagreeable impressions much longer than Mr. Osborne ; and I should have thought that, like him, in the bottle, and in the society of his tallyho companions, he would soon have forgotten the circumstance ; but it is not easy to estimate correctly the human character ; for in whatever degree we may appear to be endued with particular qualities of the mind, it always requires some individual chord to be struck, and made to vibrate, before we can satisfactorily determine the strength of tone and elasticity of the feelings which are excited ; and it was probable that Charles Wilson himself knew not the depth of his attachment to his sister, nor the keenness of his own susceptibility, till the elopement

occurred. Here was an additional circumstance, had any been required, to deepen my regret for that occurrence ; but I had long ceased to look back upon it with any other feelings than those of remorse.

On the following morning I called on Mr. Templeton ; there was at first a degree of coldness in his manner, but it wore off after a little time passed in conversation. He had been married three years to Mary Hunter ; and it gave me pleasure to know that this lovely girl was united to a man who could so justly estimate her amiable qualities, and whose character made him so worthy to be her protector. John Hunter had never been heard of, and probably he was dead ; and I was inclined to agree in opinion with Mr. Templeton, that this intelligence would be the best they could hear of him, there seemed so little chance of his reformation.

Mr. and Mrs. Fortescue had lived together a life of mutual disagreement, till, about a year since, they separated, she agreeing to allow him

a certain portion of the income left under her father's will, on condition of his never residing with her, and that the children, of whom there were three, should remain with her. These terms he had accepted ; and he was now living with some woman he had formerly known, in the vicinity of St. James's Street, and was a nightly visitant at the pandemoniums in that quarter.

I was peculiarly gratified at the returning cordiality of Mr. Templeton's manner ; and after engaging to dine with him, we separated.

## CHAPTER XVI.

“ I cannot but remember such things were.”

MACBETH.

WHILE abroad, I had seen many spots with which I had been highly captivated, and at the time I had mentally resolved to fix at one or the other of them ; and my return to England was connected with some vague kind of intention of selling my estate at S—— ; but I know not how it was, although I had not a single friend, except Templeton and his wife, in whose welfare I was interested, still I could not decide on separating myself for ever from the land of my birth. It was here that the green and sunny part of my pilgrimage had been passed, when the scene glowed with love and hope, and the horizon was

unobscured by clouds ;—here, mingled with their kindred dust, reposed the ashes of the only being who had ever loved me with a holy and disinterested affection. Memory fondly reverted to the scenes of other days, and lingered on the past. These ties, although ideal and invisible, were more powerful than I supposed ; and influenced by them, I determined not to quit England ; but as I could not reside at S—, to look out for some small estate in another county. Indeed, at one time, I seriously thought of turning farmer, and cultivating my own fields, an occupation for which, it may be guessed, I was preëminently qualified. In pursuance of my resolution, I looked over advertisements and notices of sale, and went two or three journeys, without meeting with anything that suited my views. One morning in November, I was returning by the coach from Bury in Suffolk. I had been viewing the previous day a small house and grounds, that were to be disposed of, in the vicinity, and which, as usual, were much

more highly ornamented by Mr. R—— than by Dame Nature.

What very trifles have power to call up old familiar faces, and scenes long passed away ;—an inflection of the voice, a look, a smile, a fleeting expression of countenance, the smell of some particular flower or perfume ; but, above all, a ballad, an air, a strain in music. Thought dwells upon the recollection, whether the objects are separated from us by distance, by estrangement, by death, or by worse than death—shame and dishonour. The beautiful ballad of “ Auld Robin Gray ” was sung by a woman in the inn-yard at Bury, while I was at breakfast. Her voice was pleasing, and accompanied by a harp. I had never heard it since Margaret sang it to me ; it was a favourite air, and the exquisite melody of her voice gave effect to its touching simplicity. Such a host of sad recollections crowded on me, as the woman continued singing, that I was moved even to tears ; and memory brooded on the images and associations



she had conjured up. Alas ! where was she now ? I continued lost in the thoughts to which this trivial circumstance had given rise, as we proceeded on our way ; when at Sudbury a woman, plainly but respectably clad, entered the coach. She was accompanied by two lovely children ; and at the coach door they parted with a man who appeared to be a farmer, and who, in a hearty John Bull manner, kissed the children, and wished the female a pleasant journey. He then called out to the coachman to put Mrs. Nevill down at the usual place. Nevill !—I never could hear that name without a pang. I looked at her intently, but not without apprehension. She was an interesting woman, about her age. I remembered, too, a girl and boy were left fatherless on that dreadful night. In a moment the scene passed before my eyes again, vividly, with all its horrors ; the pistol—the ghastly wound—the disfigured corpse. I sat for a few moments absorbed in the contemplation. But the name was common—I might be mis-

taken. I roused myself to talk on some casual subject. At the end of the stage I got out. My surmises were correct ; from the coachman, who knew many of the particulars, I learned that she resided in the neighbourhood of Sudbury, with her brother. She had lived in great comfort with her husband, until they went to Paris, when his melancholy death, and the previous loss of all his property, blasted her comfort, and left her destitute. Soon after this catastrophe her father died, and left her a small sum ; upon which, and the kindness of her relations, she struggled to maintain herself and her children. She was now on her way to spend some time with a married sister at Westham. " Poor thing !" he said ; " she is badly off, and can hardly make both ends meet ; and as there was plenty of room, I told her to get inside."

And but for me, the husband, the father of these poor bereaved creatures, would, perhaps, have been still in existence—still looked up to by them as their stay and solace—still blessed with the en-

dearments, the caresses of these objects of his fondest attachment ; while, loving and beloved, years might have rolled on in tranquil enjoyment of mutual felicity, till age crept on, and his sun went down in the serene and peaceful evening of a well-spent life. How I hated myself as I thought on all this. I recoiled from entering the coach again. I believed I could not bear to see the widow—the orphans whom I, yes, I ! had made so. It was like opening the wounds afresh which time had cicatrized ; but I deserved to suffer some portion of the torture which I had caused them to experience. I would not shrink from the probe—I would hear those voices, to whose glad tones a father's feelings had once responded, even although they made my heart ache with sorrow. I did so—I found Mrs. Nevill tranquil, I might even say cheerful. I conversed as well as I could, but that was not much. A leaden weight oppressed my spirits ; and when, towards the end of the journey, the youngest child, the boy, familiarly

nestled closer to my side, and as he prattled, looked into my face with the laughing eyes of childhood, good God! it was too much; and I thought I should have been choked with struggling to suppress my emotions. The boy was like him, too.

I was silent the remainder of the distance till we arrived at the place of their destination; and it was a welcome relief when they left me to myself. My feelings had been subjected to a painful degree of tension, and the relaxation was instantaneous and violent. I soon after left the coach at Aldgate, having first obtained Mrs. Nevill's address from the coachman; and meditating intently and sorrowfully on the curious chances of life, proceeded on my way through Leadenhall Street, when I was suddenly startled from my reverie by hearing close to my ear a voice, which I had not heard for years, but which made my soul thrill within me. Had a pistol been fired by the side of my head, I could not have experienced a greater shock. I looked

at the speaker, a shabbily-dressed woman, one of that class which lives by the wages of infamy ; but the night was very foggy, and I could not distinguish features. Her figure indeed was like—but I would not believe it. Again she spoke—I grasped her arm, almost convulsively, without speaking. There was a gas lamp at the distance of a few feet—we walked on—Oh God ! it was Margaret !

There was a narrow turning on the north side of the street, up which I mechanically accompanied her, till we came to a paved court, where a flaring lamp seemed struggling to extricate itself from the gloom which surrounded it. We again turned, and stopped at a house, the door of which was opened to her knock, by a flaunting, low-looking woman, whose hair, of a fiery red, hung in ringlets, and whose pug-nosed face and impudent eyes were strongly expressive of low debauchery. She gave us a light, which she brought from the back room, from whence an odoriferous cloud of tobacco smoke and a dis-

gusting execration were simultaneously expelled.

We went up one flight of steep and narrow stairs.

On leaving the coach, I had enveloped my neck in a handkerchief, with which I contrived to keep the lower part of my face concealed, and I had hardly spoken a word. We entered a room, —small, miserable, and full of fog. I looked round—a truckle bed, two or three crippled rush-bottomed chairs, a broken-legged deal table, covered with a piece of faded baize, and two strips of ragged carpet, were its furniture ; while the expiring fire glimmered faintly in the grate, and the candle flared from the influx of air through a broken pane in the window ; it struck chill and desolate on my feelings, and a shudder passed over me for a moment. I took off my hat and handkerchief, and drawing her towards the candle, I fixed my eyes upon her face. She stared at me—in a husky voice I said, “ Do you know me, Margaret ? ”

“ Yes,” she screamed out, “ you are Edward Douglas ; ” and before I was aware, she had

thrown her arms round me, and would have pressed her lips to mine. I broke from her embrace—the unfortunate woman had been drinking. I suspected it before, and now her breath gave evidence of something more than nectar.

“Margaret,” I said, “do not mistake me—I loathe your caresses. I did not seek you; the merest accident in the world occasioned our meeting.”

“Well,” she replied, “Edward, you need not be so angry with me.”

“You are not in a state to listen to me now,” I said; “but to-morrow, I will see you again.”

She consented to this, after having, in language at which my feelings revolted, urged me to remain till morning; and I left her in disgust.

This, then, was the object of my youthful adoration. “Oh! how fall’n, how changed!” This was the shrine before which my early vows had been offered. Alas! how desecrated, how defiled!

## CHAPTER XVII.

“ By sloth corrupted, by disorder fed,  
Made bold by want, and prostitute for bread.”

PRIOR.

I WENT in the morning—again was the door opened by the creature I had seen before. Her morning face, in which it was not easy to determine whether dirt or impudence predominated, and her slatternly dishabille, did not increase my admiration of her. I saw Margaret—she was at least sober ; and if I dared, I would have hoped there were symptoms of compunction in her countenance, as she made some apology for her behaviour the previous evening, which she ascribed to having been persuaded by a friend



to drink, after having fasted the whole of the day. Her form seemed wasted from want or illness; her face, pallid and thin as it was, showed traces of intemperance ; and her sunken eyes would still have been beautiful, amidst the wreck of all her charms, but for a certain boldness of expression, to me particularly disagreeable. My heart bled for her as I saw the change, and as I thought of Margaret Wilson, happy and lovely,—of her mother, of the home of her childhood. I expressed my sorrow at seeing her in such distressing circumstances. She then told her story :—

“ As soon as we reached Paris, I saw your love for me began rapidly to diminish. Women are quick-sighted in detecting any falling off in the regard of those they love. Every day gave me fresh instances of this change ; and as I had forfeited the world’s good opinion, as I had sacrificed my reputation to live with you, I was stung that you should so soon cease to entertain that love which you once professed for me, and

which I thought the sacrifice I had made would have confirmed. Although our marriage was to take place, yet I was too well aware that for this reparation of disgrace I should be indebted solely to your justice. My company became irksome to you—you left me often ; Dubois was very intimate with us—you were pleased when he was with me. It seemed that my society imposed such a disagreeable constraint on your time and inclinations, that you felt grateful to him for occupying my attention, so that you might be freed from the irksomeness of passing any time with me, that could possibly be passed elsewhere ; and you left us together, while more agreeable company than mine was required for your amusement. I saw all this—I felt all this—for some time. However, Dubois had admired me from the first : his attentions were as unremitting as your neglect was continual. I liked him more and more. I scorned to be indebted to your generosity for the sanction of marriage, when you had no longer any love for me. My

pride could not bear that, and I resolved to leave you.

“ Mme. La Roche was in our confidence, and assisted in our arrangements. I left Paris with the conviction that, by doing so, I relieved you from the presence of one whom you no longer cared for. I had written a letter to you, filled with reproaches; but I afterwards destroyed it, I scarcely know why, and I did not write another. Dubois was gay and liberal, and I lived happily with him in Italy for nearly two years. At Naples he became acquainted with a second-rate singer at the opera, an ugly creature; nevertheless, she contrived to persuade him into a belief that she was beautiful, and that he was in love with her; and our connexion was at an end. However, he behaved generously to me at parting. I then accepted the protection of an Englishman named Leslie, whom I knew but slightly; but whose appearance and manner of living induced me to suppose him a man of fortune. After a stay of a few weeks at Naples,

I accompanied him to England. We came to London—he took handsomely furnished apartments for me, and everything went on as usual for some time. One morning, a friend of his, named Fortescue, whom I had seen before, called upon me : he was the bearer of a letter, which informed me that Leslie had been unfortunate at one of the hells the previous night, that he was utterly ruined, and that it was impossible for him to see me again, as he was compelled to leave London precipitately, but strongly recommended Mr. Fortescue to me as one who would do all in his power to serve me. I believed all this time at that. I did not then know the lies and villainy of which men are capable when they have a purpose to serve. I have since then learned that Leslie was a man of ruined fortune, and a gambler by profession ; that he was tired of me, and adopted this plan of getting rid of me as the least expensive and inconvenient. Mr. Fortescue expressed himself ready to give me assistance in any plan that I

might form ; at the same time making me liberal offers, if I chose to accept his protection. This I agreed to do : he was handsome and insinuating, and I continued to reside in the same apartments. Three or four weeks after this, I was seized with a shivering, one evening, as I was coming home from the theatre with Fortescue, and the next day was confined to my room, with what I supposed to be a cold. Other symptoms, however, showed themselves in a few days, and the result was an illness, which prevented my stirring from my room for six weeks. Fortescue had called two or three times in the course of the first week ; but afterwards ceased to call, or even to send to enquire after me. Thanks to the medical advice my servant procured for me, and the attention I received from her, I recovered ; and fortunately, at the beginning of my illness, I had a few pounds ; but they were not enough to pay the expenses incurred in the end. As soon, then, as I could hold a pen, I wrote to Fortescue, and begged to see him immediately,

as I had not money sufficient to pay my doctor's bill. I received for answer that he had had a run of bad luck at play, that he could do nothing for me, and was going out of town for some weeks—the black-hearted wretch ! I was compelled to pawn or sell all my trinkets ; among other things, a gold watch given to me by Mr. Osborne ; and after paying all expenses, I had but a few shillings ; and for the first time in my life poverty stared me in the face. I hired a wretched garret in an obscure court in the neighbourhood of Fortescue's house, to which I conveyed my clothes. The first thing I did was to write to my brother, begging him to send me a little money, and I had the hope of an answer to cling to for a few days ; but my letter was returned to me, and I found he had left S——, and it was not known what had become of him. I felt this disappointment keenly ; and the only thing that kept me from sinking into utter despondency, was that craving for revenge, that occupied my thoughts night and day, against the

infernal villain who caused my illness, and then basely deserted me. I cared little for eating or drinking—I scarcely slept at all, so burning was my thirst for vengeance ; and had I met him, I should not have scrupled to plunge a knife into his body, although certain my own life would have been forfeited.

“ The debility, however, that followed my illness, kept me at home for some time, and I became more calm. I took nourishment to support my frame, although to procure it I was compelled to part with nearly every thing ; and I slowly got stronger ; but illness had worn me to a skeleton. It was my intention to watch an opportunity of getting into his house, and if he refused to render me assistance, to expose the mean, lying villain, before his wife and servants. I did not give any credit to the story of his being in the country, and I resolved to watch incessantly, till I saw him enter his house. I did so, and on the evening of the fifth day of my watching, I saw him approach—I waited im-

patiently—the door was opened—immediately I sprung up the steps, and before the servant could close it, I pushed by him, and followed Fortescue into the hall. I spoke to him; at first he did not recognise me, so much had illness altered me: I told him my sufferings, my destitution—he heard me unmoved—he told me, he could not do any thing for me, and coldly advised me to go on the town. Yes, this cursed, pitiful scoundrel—my blood boiled at this. We had been talking in a low tone of voice, but now I screamed with rage—I cursed him—I called him every opprobrious name I could think of, till my passion came to such a height, that I flew at him, determined to inflict some mark upon him, that he might carry to his grave. I could not succeed, although I was strong from frenzy, for another servant made his appearance, and after an ineffectual struggle to release myself from their grasp, during which the wretch walked up stairs, I was thrust out of



doors, imprecating curses upon him. Rage had supported me through this scene ; but as I slowly walked from the house, filled with mortification, my knees trembled under me, and I fainted.

“ On my recovery, I found myself surrounded by several persons, from whose observations I learned, that they charitably concluded that I was intoxicated ; however, I sat on the steps where I was, for a few moments, till a boy brought me a glass of water from a neighbouring shop ; and after drinking it, was able to walk, although but slowly ; and followed by a few boys, who expected some amusement, I arrived at home. Although reduced almost to my last shilling, that spirit, of which, thank God, I have so great a share, still kept me up ; and I determined yet to annoy him in every way in my power. I wrote letters to his wife, in which I related at length all the circumstances of our intimacy, and his conduct afterwards—I wrote

to him, threatening him with vengeance; but all this, although in some measure gratifying to me, would not furnish me with food, and hunger soon became so importunate, as to stifle even revenge. The advice he had so brutally offered, I was compelled to follow—I walked the streets for bread—I was soon enabled to take a somewhat better lodging; and true to my purpose of annoying him, I was again on the look-out for him. Near St. James's Street, there was a gambling house, which I knew he frequently went to; and I have loitered about it all hours of the night, almost praying for his appearance. I began to think he was in the country, and was almost in despair; when one morning, about two o'clock, I saw him coming out, arm in arm with Leslie; they had fleeced some one, for they were laughing. I rushed forward, frantic at seeing the two villains—I sprung at Fortescue with a cry—he grasped my arms, and held me from him. He knew me—he said, 'Here is that drunken b—— Wilson again,'—and the

other laughed—oh how I swore at them, while they laughed in derision! Suddenly, I got my right hand out of his grasp, and struck a blow, with all the force that hatred could give, on his mouth—it spoiled his laughing, at least—the police came up—I was given in charge, and locked up for the night; and such a night I never passed. Still my spirit kept me up—morning came, and as they did not appear, I was discharged.

“Soon after this I learned that he and his wife were separated; but whether in consequence of my letters, I never knew. At all events, I pleased myself with thinking that it was so, and that I had been the means of opening the woman’s eyes to his conduct. One morning, early, I was returning to my lodgings, which were in a narrow and badly lighted street, when at the darkest part of it, I was suddenly struck to the ground by a blow at the back of the head, which stunned me; and whilst down, I was brutally kicked; and I was in a state of un-

consciousness for some time. A private watchman going his rounds, found me groaning with pain ; he procured assistance, and I was carried to my room. I was dangerously bruised, and could not stir out for some weeks ; and even now, at times, I feel so much pain, that I think there must be an internal hurt to occasion it. Whoever it was that inflicted the blow, must have been concealed in some recess or doorway, and stole out as I passed, for I neither saw nor heard any one ; and I am certain I was not followed. I had had a violent quarrel with a woman living near me, a few days before ; but I had no suspicion that she was concerned. My thoughts pointed in another direction ; and as soon as I could crawl, I made enquiry after Fortescue. From a source I could depend upon, I learned that he had been in the country for some time, and was there when it happened. I still suspected him ;—it was so like the cowardly wretch.

“To pay the expenses of my illness, I was

again obliged to part with almost every thing, but what I had on my back ; and as the quarrel with the woman was a source of annoyance to me, I determined to go from that part of the town altogether, and take a cheaper lodging. Accordingly, I came here, about three months ago; but persecution followed me, for five weeks since I was again attacked in a similar manner, by a ruffianly blow from behind, which again stunned me ; but this time I was not kicked, or struck again, for a woman came up, (almost immediately, it must have been,) or else I should not have escaped as I did : she could not discern any person—the night was as dark as pitch ; and it was at the dullest part of that street through which we came last night, that I was attacked. I have not recovered, and I suppose I never shall recover from the effects of the ill treatment I have received. I occasionally go to his haunts, but I never see him ; they say he is still in the country—there is nothing in this world, would give me so much pleasure as

.

to know that he was brought to ruin and disgrace, or to an untimely and painful end ; for if ever there was a fiend in human shape, Fortescue is one."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

“ Try what repentance can.”

HAMLET.

How little heed do we take of the consequences of our crimes—how little do men of pleasure know, or if they know, how little do they care, what is the lot of those unhappy beings whom they have seduced from the path of innocence, for the gratification of their own transient passion, and have afterwards thrown aside like “poisonous weeds,” to decay and corrupt.

Margaret’s recital met with little interruption from me ; I was absorbed in painful attention the whole of the time :—what a melancholy picture of degradation and misery ! My heart

smote me, as I thought on the bitter fruits our acquaintance had produced—had she never known me, she would still have been living with Osborne; and if they were not happy, they would have been no worse off than thousands in the world, who live for many years as husbands and wives, mutually unhappy; yet, without violating the decencies of married life, or even infringing its decorum: and if not happy, at least she would have known neither poverty nor shame, and would have been far, far removed from the outcast she was at present. I now saw in its proper light, the cruelty of my conduct, in treating her with neglect, as I had done. Whatever faults I discovered in her, I ought not to have suffered her to perceive any diminution in my affection for her. She felt it; and as she truly said, in the sacrifice of reputation she had made for me, I ought to have overlooked every consideration. We should then have been married, if what she said was true, that my neglect alone impelled her to act as she had done. Of



this, however, I had some doubts. I could not avoid seeing—indeed, it was painfully evident, that although sensible to the pain, the poverty and the want she had experienced, yet that she was indifferent or callous to the guilt and infamy of her career. Indeed, there was not an expression uttered by her, which betrayed the existence in her bosom of such a sentiment as shame. She neither shed tears of regret or penitence, during her narrative, with one exception—when she spoke of having written to her brother, and of her letter having been returned, tears were in her eyes for a few moments ; but the predominant feeling in her mind was the desire of vengeance : and as she related the particulars of her connection with Fortescue, of the treatment she had received from him actually, and that of which her suspicions only pointed to him as the author, she became excited and violent in the extreme. In answer to my questions, I soon ascertained that he was the Fortescue I suspected, and profligate as he

was, I could not have believed he would have acted so basely towards her ; so basely, indeed, as to render it probable that even the cowardly attacks of which she had been the victim, were not too villainous for him to have conceived.

Her story was finished ; and after having given, at her request, some account of my travels, I proceeded to lay before her the plan I proposed for her adoption : it was this, that she should leave London, and take up her residence in some retired and distant part of the country, where I would remit to her a certain sum quarterly, sufficient to maintain her in comfort and respectability ; but I insisted, as an indispensable preliminary, that her departure from London should be immediate. It might have been not unreasonably supposed, that this offer would have been accepted with eagerness ;—on the contrary, she hesitated. I depicted in as vivid colours as I could, the infamy, the disease, the perdition, to which her course of life exposed her ; and contrasted with these the comfort, the

health, the repentance which she would now find, only, in tranquil obscurity. She listened to me, but her reluctance was evident ; and I was convinced, although she would not confess it, that she cherished such implacable hatred to Fortescue, that she wished to remain in London for some time longer, for the purpose of repeating her former annoyances ; or, perhaps of wreaking upon him some more deadly act of vengeance than she had yet attempted—for

“ Hell has no fury like a woman scorn’d.”

She pressed me strongly to consent to her departure being delayed for a few days only, but I was peremptory ; I was resolved she should not sleep even another night where she was : and although complaining of the extreme suddenness of her departure, she acquiesced.

The wretch to whom the house belonged was paid for the rent of Margaret’s room, and she left this den of vice and infamy immediately. I supplied her with money, and that very evening had the satisfaction of seeing her set off

for Yorkshire, which county she had herself pitched upon, after promising to let me know, in the course of a few days, where she had fixed her residence.

The singular coincidence of meeting Mrs. Nevill and Margaret, dwelt much upon my mind—I was not superstitious naturally, nor a believer in the doctrines of fatality; but I could not altogether divest myself of the notion that my meeting them was not a mere fortuitous event.

It was nearly five years since the occurrence of the melancholy catastrophe in which Mrs. Nevill was interested, and it was more than four years since I had seen, or even heard of Margaret; and accidentally (as it seemed) returning from the country, I encounter both of them, on the same day. It was singular, too, that I intended to have gone to Cambridge that day, instead of returning to town; and it was from an impulse for which I could not account, a caprice, I thought at the moment, that I altered

my resolution. There was the music too, which, with its associations, predisposed my thoughts in the same direction. The more I thought about it, the stronger became my conviction that it was predetermined that we were to meet, by some higher power, in whose hands (as it seemed to me) I was to be instrumental in relieving the poverty of the fatherless and the widow, and in rescuing a castaway from the path of destruction. This last I had endeavoured to do, and I hoped successfully; and I now sent a sum of money to Mrs. Nevill, as a debt due to her husband. She never knew from whence it came, and I afterwards experienced that internal glow of satisfaction, which usually accompanies the consciousness of having endeavoured to make all the reparation in our power, however inadequate that may be, to those upon whom our crimes or follies have inflicted injury or insult.

## CHAPTER XIX.

“ Domestic happiness, thou only bliss  
Of Paradise that has survived the fall !  
Thou art the nurse of virtue : in thine arms  
She smiles, appearing, as in truth she is,  
Heaven-born, and destined to the skies again.”

COWPER.

My intimacy with Mr. Templeton was now upon its former footing of cordiality, and I was a frequent visitor at his house. Mary (as I shall continue to call her) always received me with kindness ; although I well knew the delicacy of her principles must have been shocked at the criminality of my conduct. She was grown a charming woman ; and blessed with the love of her husband, and with two fine boys, of whom

she was devotedly fond, her domestic happiness seemed complete ; while her sweetness of temper, and goodness of heart, were daily more and more developed in her duties of wife and mother. In contemplating her—and when is woman such a lovely object of contemplation as in the domestic relations of life, when mistress of a happy home, with fond hearts and smiling faces clustering round her ?—I often thought, how superlatively blessed my lot might have been with her, perhaps, had not my heart been pre-occupied by one engrossing idea—the dream of my youth. I thought, too, of her father, that good old man—with what grateful joy his heart would have overflowed, could he have witnessed the well-merited happiness of his best and favourite child. Perhaps he did—it is delightful to hold such a belief—to think that the soul of that being which in life has most loved and cared for us, even more than for itself, may now look down from above on our virtue and happiness, with calm and holy joy—to believe, that

Whilst crime, and sorrow, and misery, are shut out from the view of the spirits of the just made perfect, it may be permitted to them to regard with tranquil enjoyment, those scenes in which the virtues and affections elevate sublunary felicity to the highest perfection of which its nature is capable.

With all the weakness and imperfection of Mrs. Fortescue's character, it was pleasing to observe that she was by no means devoid of that most pure, and most powerful of all the affections of the human heart—maternal love. I have said there were three children; of whom one, the eldest boy, was afflicted with some internal disease, which threatened soon to terminate his little life; and her attention and devotion to these children, but more particularly to the afflicted one, were exemplary. To the honour of the sex, it is rare indeed that an instance occurs of want of love for their offspring: this at least is seldom one of their failings. On the contrary, they are prone to take



the other extreme, and by misplaced tenderness, and mistaken indulgence, lay the foundation in children of tender years, too often, of those unequal tempers, and hurtful passions, which embitter the domestic comfort, and mar the social happiness of "children of larger growth."

With respect to Mrs. Fortescue's eldest child, its ill-health and affliction were sufficient reasons for all her indulgence ; it was hard that he should be the victim, and his innocent life should pay the forfeit of his father's licentiousness—and it is a beautiful property of the affections, that the child whose affliction or disease makes most frequent calls upon the anxiety and patience of its mother, should, in most cases, be the dearest to her heart. But with her other children there was not this excuse ; yet was there something touching in the answers she would give to her sister's occasional remonstrances on her injudicious and extravagant indulgence : " Poor things, they have no father ; how can I be unkind to them ?" or, " They

love me so well, and who is to love them, if I do not;" or perhaps the old story, "They will know better by and bye." These answers generally put a stop to further remonstrance, for who that knew the circumstances, could do otherwise than pity, and in some measure, excuse her?—they had no father—it was far worse than that even—they had a father, a disgrace to the name, who had carried pollution into the bosom of his family, and was living in open and flagrant violation of his conjugal duties, and in base and unnatural dereliction of his children's affections. On her, then, solely devolved the care of them; and as, in consequence of Mr. Hunter's foresight, her husband had no control over her property, she had at her own disposal the means of obtaining those comforts in life which are to be purchased; and in the mean time, the children were being successfully trained as recruits for that admirable corps, the "Little Pickles," by being duly pampered and petted.

Mary, who was gentleness herself, sincerely compassionated her sister, and did all she could to alleviate the bitterness of her lot ; and it was fortunate that Mrs. Fortescue did not feel as acutely as the majority of her sex would have felt, in such trying circumstances. I met her at her sister's often—she was in many respects as weak and capricious as ever ; but not quite so much in the “high sentimental latitudes” as formerly ; the tone of sentiment was lowered a few degrees, by the ingratitude of her husband, and the “stern cold realities of life.” Of him I never heard her speak ; but his profligacy was so undisguised and revolting, that although the father of her children, it was not possible she could feel for him any other sentiments than those of disgust and aversion. As from her sister she always received kindness and sympathy, so in her sister's husband she invariably found a sincere and steady friend ; and although, at the time of their marriage, Mrs. Fortescue openly asserted that Mary's fortune was the grand

attraction in his eyes, yet she now always had recourse to him for advice on every emergency, which he, whose mind was incapable of retaining mean or ungenerous resentment, gave with as much disinterestedness and kindness as Mr. Hunter himself would have done : indeed, his daily conduct strongly proved how well he merited the large fortune which Mary possessed by her father's will, and the still greater treasure of her virtues ; and it was delightful to turn from the profligate Fortescue to the high-principled Templeton—exemplary as the husband, the father, the man—delightful to witness a family so closely united by the strong, but gentle bonds of affection. Ah, affection ! better is the hovel, with thee for an inmate, than the palace without thee — better the “ dinner of herbs,” than “ the stalled ox.”

## CHAPTER XX.

“ Sure some ill fate's upon me,  
Distrust and heaviness sit round my heart.”

OTWAY.

AT this time I met with a purchaser for my estate at S——. I knew that it was intrinsically worth a larger sum than was offered for it; but I had made up my mind that I should never reside there again—accordingly it was sold. I went down to S——, for the last time, but stayed no longer than was necessary for the purpose of removing some old-fashioned articles, which had a value in my eyes, because they had belonged to my mother, who prized them. There they were, with the familiarity of old ac-

quaintance, in the identical places they occupied in the days of my childhood. I visited, too, that sacred and melancholy spot, at the sight of which there are few hearts so indurated by the affairs of the world as to be entirely insensible to feelings of tenderness and regret—a mother's grave. The setting sun poured a stream of golden light on the tombs and hillocks of mortality, and scarcely a breath of air disturbed the motionless foliage. As I bent over the tomb which covered the remains of one whose heart had been warmed with the holiest and purest feelings of devotion and love, the still and solemn beauty of the scene was in harmony with my feelings—I thought on the past, and wept.

Celibacy, I felt assured, was to be my lot; and to one so unconnected with his fellow-creatures by ties of kindred as myself, it mattered little where I lived. In London, however, there were the inducements of Mr. Templeton's friendship and society, and these determined me to reside somewhere in its neighbourhood. Ac-

Accordingly I bought a cottage at Highgate : its situation was open and elevated, and, together with these advantages, possessed the recommendation of being but a short distance from town. The house was surrounded by a garden of tolerable size, and I had a good, although small, selection of books ; and time glided on swiftly and smoothly in these tranquil enjoyments, for a considerable period.

From the window of a small room, which I had fitted up as a library, I had seen a man pass frequently, and once or twice stop and cast a quick glance at the house ; but when I showed myself at the window, he hastily walked away. I once met this man as I was walking at a little distance from the house, and it struck me forcibly that I had seen features like his formerly, but I could not recollect when or where.

It happened one night, that after going to bed at my usual hour, I could not sleep. My senses were steeped in wakefulness, and my eyelids seemed to have forgotten to slumber. With all

My courting and soliciting "Nature's sweet restorer," I made no progress towards obtaining her. This was an uncommon circumstance with me, for I usually fell asleep in ten minutes after being in bed; and I was proportionally irritated. I was perfectly well, and had taken as much exercise as I was accustomed to do; but it seemed as if I was possessed with some restless devil. I tried all schemes to induce drowsiness. I buried myself in arithmetical calculations till I was bewildered, but not sleepy—I played over again a game at chess which I had lost the night before, with no better result—I began to fancy I felt feverish—I rose, drank water copiously, and paced my room. One thing was certain—I was uneasy; and some vague presentiment of evil was impressed upon my mind so strongly, that if there had existed one person in the world whom I loved with anxious affection, my apprehension would have pointed to that person as threatened with illness, misfortune, or death.



I had begun reading a novel of Sir Walter Scott's the day before ; and as I found sleeping was altogether hopeless, I determined to continue it for an hour or two ; and, accordingly, having lighted my candle, and put on a dressing-gown, I was proceeding down stairs to the room in which I had left the books, when I stopped suddenly. I thought I heard a whisper. I listened ; "No," I said ; "it is fancy—my nerves are unstrung from restlessness." I went down another stair or two—again I heard the whispering, and this time I felt less able to persuade myself that it was fancy. I stood still a few moments—presently there was a sound of something slightly creaking, and I hastily but silently ascended to my room. I loaded my pistols, but I had only powder to load them with ; for the death of poor Mr. Nevill had occasioned me so much mental anguish, that I had internally vowed never to take the life of any human being under any circumstance whatever, excepting only the extremity of self-defence ; and I would

rather have been robbed of my last shilling, than have had the weight of blood again on my conscience. Leaving my pistols and the candle in my room, and armed only with a sword stick, which I had bought in Italy, and which had been my companion in all my solitary rambles, I came down stairs—I could grope my way about the house in the dark without difficulty. I was now nearly at the bottom of the staircase. I listened with intense anxiety, scarcely drawing breath. All was still—there was not a sound broke the silence, but the ticking of the hall clock, when all at once it struck the hour of two. Immediately there was a slight noise of something falling in the front room on the right hand; and I distinctly heard, as I mounted quickly up stairs to the landing, an articulate whisper of—“D—— your eyes, what the hell’s the matter with ye?” Some answer was given, but in a lower whisper. I debated with myself whether I should not return to my bed-room immediately, and give an alarm. All this time I rivetted

my attention upon the door of the room from which the voice proceeded. There was a fan light over the door, which just admitted a sort of dim light, by which I was barely enabled to discern if any object moved, while I was screened from being seen by my position at the winding of the staircase. Presently a head was slowly thrust through the doorway, apparently in the act of listening; and after two or three minutes had passed, was drawn in again. I again descended, and with extreme caution, and on tiptoe, stepped to the door of the room. It was half opened, and I took a hasty observation of what was going on. A candle was burning in one corner of the room, partly shaded by something or other; by its light, however, I was enabled to discover that my nocturnal visitors were three in number, and that there were fire-arms deposited on a table in the centre of the room. I held my breath as a strong light was turned on an escritoire on the opposite side of the room, and I found they were preparing to open it. At this

moment one of the men leaned forward; the light shone on his face, and I recognised the features of the man I had seen lurking about the place. I had seen quite enough to convince me of my danger: the moment was critical, and there was no time to be lost. They would not find any money in the *escritoire*, and then in all probability they would use no superfluous ceremony in entering my room. I returned quickly up stairs, and fastened my chamber door. I then threw up the window sash, and fired one of my pistols. Immediately I heard a crash of some heavy piece of furniture thrown down, a noise of pushing and scuffling, and as they got into the hall, I could hear oaths muttered in a growling voice. They rushed through the door at the back of the house, at which they had made their entrance, and I fired again. For a moment I saw them in the obscurity of the night, and with great pleasure heard the clattering of their retreating footsteps as they ran with "*sauve qui peut*" rapidity to the bottom of the

garden. My household consisted of two female servants and a boy ; but the last was gone into the country for a few days, to see his father, who was ill. The others, as might be supposed, were dreadfully alarmed ; and I had some trouble to convince them of their safety. The fellows had broken open the *escritoire*, and everything was in confusion ; and in the suddenness of their departure, they had left behind them a dark lantern and a pair of pistols, besides other implements of their vocation. The glimpse I had obtained of the man's features, although only momentary, confirmed my previous opinion, as to a likeness of some one I had known ; but my memory was as much at fault as before, and I gradually ceased to think about it. The most extraordinary circumstance was the uneasiness and wakefulness which affected, or rather disaffected me in so unusual a manner, and to which the preservation of my life, perhaps, was owing. The odds were fearful ; and even if I had been wise enough to make no attempt at

resistance, there was but little money in the house ; and in revenge for their disappointment, they might have taken my life. At all events, it would have been in the hands of the triumvirate, whose “ tender mercies ” I was glad to have escaped.

## CHAPTER XXI.

“ Man of frailty,  
Beware the dangerous beauty of the wanton ;  
Shun their enticements—ruin, like a vulture,  
Waits on their conquests.”

OTWAY.

PRESERVATION from impending danger is succeeded, in the minds of the generality of men, by gratitude more or less to that Providence which has preserved them ; and although there may be some who have not this feeling in any degree, and many more with whom it is only a transitory emotion, which lives but a short time after the event which gave it birth ; yet are there some in whose minds it is a strong and lasting principle. The man who, to an ardent

imagination, unites devotional feeling, finds in the beautiful and regular vicissitudes of nature, and in the changing and uncertain events of human life, constant subjects for the exercise of these qualities. At every instance of calamity from which he is delivered, his imagination kindles, and his devotion glows, with ardent gratefulness to that Power whose "stretched-out arm" has saved him.

The man who, originally endued with a susceptible imagination, has committed crime, has lived in vice, or in habitual neglect of duty, and is afterwards roused to a consciousness of the guilt of his career, is not unfrequently liable to be influenced by a morbid religious sensibility, which partakes, in some degree, of superstitious reverence; for it is with him as Addison has said, "As the finest wines have often the taste of the soil, so even the most religious thoughts often draw something that is particular from the constitution of the mind in which they arise." In the heart of this man, gratitude for his reco-



very or preservation is blended with deeper feelings of humility, and wonder that one so unworthy as himself should be spared to become an object of divine regard ; and in this spirit he views as supernatural and special interpositions, those events which rise somewhat above the level of the natural and common incidents of life.

Something of this nature clung to me. The meeting with Mrs. Nevill and Margaret had made a deep impression on me, and had given a peculiar tinge to my sentiments, which the circumstance related in the last chapter heightened and confirmed. Why was I warned of approaching danger ? Why was I, whose life was of no importance compared to that of the generality of mankind, so opportunely put on my guard, by an invisible superintending Providence ? The motive was as inscrutable as the presentiment was extraordinary, and long furnished me with matter for deep reflection and heartfelt gratitude.

Margaret resided at R—, in Yorkshire, under the name of Wilmot; and the allowance had been regularly remitted to her through a banking-house for two years; when one morning I received a letter by the twopenny post. It was anonymous; but the knowledge which the writer possessed of certain circumstances stamped upon it an importance which these illegitimate productions do not in ordinary cases obtain. The writer stated that Mrs. Wilmot was a woman of bad character; that she had destroyed the domestic happiness of an amiable woman, the mother of a large family, by seducing the affections of her husband; that he (the writer) was well aware that I had influence over Mrs. Wilmot, and hoped I would use it for the purpose of restoring happiness to the family, which, in his opinion, could only be done by her immediate removal from R—. If this were true, how miserably was my hopeful plan defeated? Although I had had occasional misgivings about her, yet, upon the whole, my hopes decidedly

preponderated, till the communication of this unexpected intelligence, the authenticity of which I would gladly have disputed; but the terms in which the writer expressed himself, showed that he knew something on the subject of the annuity which she received from me. Perhaps he knew her previous mode of life, and even our former connexion; and from whom could he have obtained all this information, except from Margaret herself?—yet there was something so egregiously foolish in the notion of her making a gratuitous disclosure of this nature, such superfluous shamelessness, that I was constrained to believe that she, at all events, had not divulged the secret of our connexion.

The only course for me to pursue, was to ascertain, with my own eyes, the truth or falsehood of this intelligence, and to regulate my conduct accordingly. Two days afterwards I left London for R——; and in the evening of my arrival at the latter place, I proceeded to reconnoitre her residence, which I had no diffi-

culty in finding. The house was small, but not mean-looking ; and while I was looking at it, a man wearing a light-coloured great coat and top boots entered it. On the other side of the street I observed there were apartments to be let, and these I engaged. They were not exactly opposite, but sufficiently so to enable me to see the entrance or departure of every one. I was at breakfast the following morning at my new abode, when the man I had seen the evening before came out. He was stout, well-looking, and had much the appearance of a substantial farmer. The day was fine, and I thought it likely, if I kept a look-out for an hour or two, that I might see her ; and in effect I was not mistaken. Towards the middle of the day she came out, dressed in the height of fashion ; in a style of elegance, in fact, which became her when she was the wife of a man who had three thousand a year ; but which certainly was not suitable to her present condition of life. Dress—how delightful to the daughters of Eve must

be the study which engages so much of their attention, and engrosses so much of their time—how sincere is their worship of this divinity, since sleep, food, health, honesty, and chastity, are daily sacrificed at the shrine of this “Diana of the Ephesians!”—Sweet soother in affliction, and gentle reconciler of matrimonial misunderstandings, and yet source prolific of all uncharitableness—“gay deceiver,” that intoxicates youth with vanity, and flatters old age into youth—tempting bait, with which Old Nick lures thoughtless and imprudent youth into crime. What is “beauty unadorned?” Pshaw! a song without accompaniment—a picture without a frame—sleep without dreams. What is it with the help of fashion and the “aid of ornament?” Hamlet set to Rossini’s music—a rose surrounded with gaudy flowers—a diamond set with gilt ornaments.

It was clear that Margaret had, by some means, discovered a gold mine; and I took the opportunity to enquire of my landlady who she

was ; and was favoured with a prolix and circumstantial detail of Margaret's history. The anonymous information was, as I anticipated, correct ; the injured wife was an exemplary woman, and the mother of six children. Her husband's connexion with Margaret began some weeks before, and was now notorious in the place : he had been, before she ensnared him, a kind husband and father, but had now degenerated into a mere brute ; and his behaviour to his wife and children was marked with harshness and unkindness. This was the substance of her account, shorn of its excrescences, and of the vehement abuse (unfortunately too well merited) with which she concluded. With the hope of allaying the chagrin and irritation produced by this confirmation of my fears, I rambled in the vicinity of the town for some hours. It was mortifying to see my plan, from which I augured such good results, so entirely frustrated ; it was disgusting to think that she could be so resolutely bent on degradation, and so lost to a

sense of her own depravity ; my choler rose to such a degree that I thought it wiser to defer coming to a resolution on the subject till the morning.

As I returned to my lodgings in the evening, I was struck with the appearance of a man, who seemed to be reconnoitering Margaret's house, in the same manner that I had done the night before. The man's size and figure almost made me shrink with involuntary apprehension at the first glance. Could it be Fortescue ? I had seen him half a dozen times, perhaps, within the last two years, and I thought I could not be mistaken. What brought him here ? Some purpose of dastardly revenge, no doubt ; his being on the watch near her house, seemed evidence of that ; but how had he discovered her ? She must have betrayed her retreat herself, in some abortive attempt to molest him. He was on the other side of the way ; I crossed, and as I approached him, my impression became stronger. It was nearly dark, and he did not perceive me

till I was within a few feet of him : he looked at me for one moment, and whistling, carelessly walked away. The face was not Fortescue's, I was certain ; but his hat was slouched over his brow, and he wore mustachios, and I determined to accost him by that name. I did so ; and was politely answered, in a tone of voice to which I was a perfect stranger ; and a second observation of his countenance convinced me of my mistake. Notwithstanding my conviction, however, I could not drive Fortescue out of my mind for the whole of the evening ; and even my dreams were occupied with him and Margaret. When I thought of the infernal hole from which I had extricated her, of the impudent harridan, of the brutality, drunkenness, and disease, to which she was exposed, and contrasted with these the comforts I had placed within her grasp, I thought the strong principle of self-love might have been powerful enough to prevent a relapse into vice, even if better motives failed to do so ; but to find her trusting to my ignorance or indifference on



the subject, trampling upon every religious consideration, and poisoning the comfort of a whole family, evinced such flagrant wickedness, that I almost resolved never to see her again. But again I recollected the first fatal step which transgressed the bounds of virtue; that step beyond the barriers, which could never be retraced; I determined to see her once, and only once more; and if she consented to break off this connection, and to leave R—— immediately, she should have one more chance of escape from perdition.

## CHAPTER XXII.

“ O most pernicious woman.”

HAMLET.

I went in the morning, but could not see her; in the evening, however, I was admitted by a decent ruddy-looking servant girl, who opened the door of a small parlour, in which I found Margaret alone. She seemed for a moment struck dumb with astonishment, and pointed to a chair.

“ You are surprised to see me ?” I said.

“ Yes,” she replied, “ I confess I am.”

She then offered me wine—I refused ; however, she placed some before me. I glanced

round the room—the furniture was good and modern. I looked at her ; she was no longer pale and thin. The lily was almost entirely banished from her countenance, and had given place to the “ red, red rose ;” while her figure was considerably increased in rotundity. I felt so mortified and disgusted, that I hardly knew what to say. After two or three unimportant remarks,

“ Do you mix at all in society ?” I said.

“ Not much,” she replied ; “ I have two or three friends whom I like very well.”

“ Is Mr. Thompson one of them ?” I said.

“ Yes,” she replied, slightly disconcerted, as I thought ; “ but what do you know of him ?”

“ I know too much, Margaret,” I answered ; “ he is a husband and a father, as you know very well.”

“ What of that ?” she said, with composure ; “ he may surely be my friend, notwithstanding.”

“ Friend do you call him ? But,” I said, “ it is to no purpose that you attempt to deceive me.

He slept here last night, and your disgraceful connexion is the common talk of the place."

"What meddling fool has been making mischief?" she said.

"I had hoped," I said, "that disgusted with a life of infamy, you would have accepted with gladness the opportunity of quitting it, and of living in tranquil obscurity and repentance. Instead of this being the case, I find you notoriously living under the protection of a married man—a man, too, who, till his unhappily meeting with you, was beloved by his family, and respected by society."

"I insist on knowing," she said, with warmth, "from whom you obtained this information, which is false."

"Margaret," I replied, "do not add falsehood to your wickedness, which is already sufficiently great. Rather confess all, and seek forgiveness where only it can be obtained."

"I have a right to know, and I will know your informant," she said, passionately.

“No,” I replied, “you will never know—it is quite unnecessary you should. It is easy for you to disprove what I have asserted, if it be not true; but you know well that you cannot. How can you be so utterly unfeeling as wantonly to inflict the deepest wound that can be given to the affections of an injured wife? Do you never imagine to yourself her wretchedness, or that of her children, whose natural protector you have seduced from them? Do you never think you hear their curses?”

“I know no business you have to lecture me in this manner; and I will not be talked to by you,” she replied.

“Margaret,” I answered, “I speak from the most heartfelt and sincere desire of serving you. I entreat you by our early intimacy, when we were children together, happy and innocent—by the mutual affection of our youth, which was then untarnished by guilt or remorse—by the love you once felt for your departed mother, whose idol you were, and whose spirit may be

hovering near you at this moment—by everything that was ever dear to you in those happy days of pure and tranquil innocence—by the remembrance of your brother—by every consideration of shame—but, above all, by the dread of that ‘inevitable hour,’ the hour of death, and by the appalling doom of everlasting condemnation—I beseech, I implore you to repent before it is too late.”

“It is becoming in you, certainly,” she said, with a sneer, “to preach to me. You, for whom I gave up the affections of a kind, generous, and good-tempered husband—you, for whom I forsook a happy home, where every indulgence was mine—you, for whom I sacrificed reputation and the esteem of the world, and became its scorn—you, who after all this slighted, disliked, hated me—at least you should be silent. What right have you to mention my mother? Do you not think she would have hated you for your conduct to me? How dare you name my brother, who always loved me, and whom you have

driven from S——? But for you, I should now be living with Mr. Osborne, instead of that ugly impudent b—— Kitty. I hate such canting affectation of morality."

"Margaret," I answered, with some irritation, "I do not seek to extenuate my conduct; I have long felt, and bitterly too, that remorse which follows consciousness of guilt; but neither can you by heaping reproaches upon me, diminish your own responsibility in the past, nor palliate, in the slightest degree, your obstinate perseverance in your present vicious course of life. What other atonement could I have made, than that which I offered?—marriage, which in the eyes of the world, was the most complete reparation that could have been given in such unhappy circumstances. I did not mention the names of your mother, nor of your brother, with the intention of exciting angry or reproachful feelings; but with the hope, that the recollection of them might call up other and far better feelings. Why, then, taunt me with what

is past, and cannot be recalled? Life is yet spared to us—penitence is yet in our power. What is the prospect before you?—a life of infamy, the evils of which I need not enumerate, for you have experienced them; a death without a friend to close your eyes; without a single consoling reflection drawn from the past, but embittered by anguish, remorse, and apprehension of an awful futurity. I am anxious, deeply anxious to deliver you from such a life, from such a death.—You must leave R——”

“And what if I object to leave R——?” she said, warmly.

“Then,” I replied, “I must withdraw the allowance, whatever sorrow I may feel; I have no alternative in that respect, but I trust you will not compel me to do so.”

“This, then,” she said, with increasing passion, “is the meaning of your fine talking; this is the secret of your pretended anxiety for me—you wish to save the money.”

“That is false,” I replied, with irritation; “it



shall be continued on the same condition upon which it was originally granted—that you live a virtuous life ; but in the first place, you must leave R——.”

“ No,” she said, in a violent rage, “ I will not ; nor will I be dictated to by you, or any one.”

“ Mistaken, unhappy woman,” I said, in a tone as calm as my excitement would permit ; “ this is our last interview, but you shall have my prayers : may the Almighty soften your heart to repentance—farewell.”

In the midst of a storm of reproaches and abuse, during which her countenance, once so beautiful, was distorted with rage to such a degree that I could not have believed it possible to have assumed so diabolical an expression, I left the room. I was surprised at discovering, just outside the room door, a smartly dressed youth, a mere stripling, who had evidently been listening. I pushed by him rather hastily, for I was in no gentle mood ; he swore at me, and

seemed vastly inclined to quarrel. "Who are you?" he said, "you d—d sneaking cowardly blackguard." I flung him from me without speaking, and rushed into the street.

It was evident from the appearance of this sprig of impertinence, this boy gallant, that he was another of her friends, as she chose to call them, and I had no doubt they were not few; in fact, she was living in as profligate a manner in reality as when she was in London, with this exception, that her external circumstances were so far improved as to place her above the necessity of indiscriminate debauchery—yes, necessity—for there was such a determined propensity to vice in the character of this Messalina, such an unaccountable depravation of principle, that I could almost have believed some resistless fate, some powerful demon urged her to perdition.

But so powerful is the operation of habit upon the conscience, that there is hardly a vice under the sun that may not be committed or persevered in, till, by repetition or indulgence, we

become almost entirely unconscious of guilt. And as in the world, by constantly or frequently associating with those whose personal defects or peculiarities rendered them at first disagreeable to us, we become reconciled, and sometimes so much accustomed to them, that parting produces regret ; so in the moral world, custom wears off the deformity of vice ; and the longer and more familiar our intimacy with it, the more painful and difficult is the separation.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

“ He that has light within his own clear breast,  
May sit i' the centre, and enjoy bright day ;  
But he that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts,  
Benighted walks under the midday sun ;  
Himself is his own dungeon.”

MILTON.

THE day after my interview with this unhappy woman, I set out on my return to London ; and on my arrival at home, I was rather surprised to learn that Mr. Fortescue had called two days previously, a thing that had never occurred before, as no intimacy subsisted between us, and we never met, but by accident ; but I was far more surprised, and indeed shocked, to find a letter from John Hunter, of whose fate we had

been so long in ignorance. It was dated from Hereford—he expressed an anxious desire to see me once more before he left the country—he was sentenced to transportation for life ; but he felt himself hourly sinking under a mortal disease, which he knew would put an end to his life in a short time. He earnestly begged me not to inform his sisters of his writing, or even of his existence ; and in affecting language, implored me to lose no time in coming to him. How fully had the foreboding of his kind father been verified, and how merciful was that dispensation which had removed him from witnessing the fulfilment. With as little delay as possible, I repaired to Hereford, and immediately went to the prison ; but imagine my surprise, on entering his cell, when in the son of the good, the benevolent Mr. Hunter, I recognised the burglar who had broken into my house at Highgate, and whose features had so much perplexed me. I was mute with astonishment—it was the middle of the day, and he had not long risen

from bed—a faint flush spread over his 'poor pallid cheeks, as he said, in a hollow voice, "I knew, sir, you would come, and I am thankful for your kindness; but I do not deserve it." I expressed my regret at finding him in such a place.

"It is a place," he said, "in which I have long expected to be, and I am not here before my time." I looked at the unhappy youth as he spoke:—his thin and emaciated countenance—his sunken and restless eyes—his hair, which when he was a boy, had been the colour of Mary's, but which was now entirely grey—his form attenuated almost to a shadow—gave striking and melancholy proofs that his career, though short, had been a harassing and anxious one. The general expression of his countenance was unlike that of his father or his sisters; but there was a slight resemblance in some of the features; and an occasional glance, or cast of countenance, strongly recalled Mrs. Fortescue to my mind. His debility was so

great, that he was only able to sit up for an hour in the middle of the day ; in fact it was evident that his hours were numbered—his story was given with difficulty, and with many interruptions.

“ You were abroad, sir,” he said, “ when my father took me from school, and placed me in the counting house. I am now sensible of the persevering endeavours of the Rev. Mr. Wallis, who had me under his tuition, to instil into my mind the principles of morality and religion, and to inspire me with at least a desire to obtain knowledge—his own example amply enforced his precepts, but all was in vain. I had no wish to excel in learning ; and with respect to morality or religion, his observations never went beyond my ear. As severity formed no part of his system, and as I was insensible to kindness, and incapable of emulation, it was only to be expected that I should bring home a very moderate degree of knowledge, which was the case ; and what was worse, I returned to my

father's house with a disposition callous to virtuous impressions. At that time, there was a servant girl living at my father's, whom I then thought pretty ; she had the appearance of modesty, but it was only the appearance, for she was impudent and artful—she made advances to me, which, I confess, I was not slow in meeting, and an intimacy was established between us, which lasted some time before it was found out ; an accident, however, discovered it, and she was immediately discharged, while I escaped with only a mild admonition : she took a lodging in the neighbourhood, where I continued to visit her by stealth.

“I was soon made acquainted with her brother, Davis, a mean cowardly villain ; and by him I was taken to a low public house, near Smithfield, where I found a number of fellows, who, though dressed (at least some of them) as gentlemen, were thorough blackguards. Of course, it was soon known who I was ; and as I always squandered money among them, I soon became



a prime favourite ; in this society, or at Fanny's lodgings, my evenings were generally spent ; and in a surprisingly short time, I became almost as hardened, and as experienced in wickedness, as the worst of them. Questions were seldom asked at home as to how or where I passed the time ; and if they were asked, I was always provided with some lie or other, ready cut and dried for the occasion ; and it was believed that I often went to the theatre, for which I pretended a great fondness, although I had no taste or enjoyment whatever for plays, or indeed for anything but the company of the wretches by whom I was courted. I soon discovered that my allowance of money, though liberal, was not sufficient to supply the demands of Fanny's extravagance, and my own irresistible inclinations to spend, and appear of consequence in the eyes of my associates. Davis and his sister soon knew this, and they suggested (but with shame I confess the idea had occurred to me before they mentioned it,) the plan of rob-

bing my father. After a little practice, I found I could pick a lock as well as Davis himself, and I put my skill in practice, by taking at various times small sums of money from my father, and now and then from my sisters, without, I believe, their suspecting me. After the first time, I scarcely felt any apprehension whatever; and made bold by success, I determined to do something on a larger scale. By constantly trying, I found that I could make a very good imitation of my father's handwriting; and I one day tore a cheque out of his cheque-book, and signed it, having first filled it up for four hundred pounds. With my usual confident manner I presented it at the banking-house for payment; notwithstanding my hardened disposition, however, I was not quite easy when the clerk, after looking at the signature, said to me, "This rather differs from your father's signature, and we would not pay it to a stranger." I merely said it was all right, and the money was paid. I exulted and gloried in my success as much as if it had been a good action; and though I

knew a discovery must be made in a few days, I did not care, as I was aware that punishment would not follow detection. After this, we—I mean the woman and myself—went some miles from London, and I never again went to my former place of resort, or associated with any of my old companions, except Davis ; but I soon found other associates of the same description. As I was compelled to supply Davis with money, as well as his sister—for I knew enough of him to believe that he would not hesitate one moment to let my father know where I was if I did not—the money went very fast, till at last it sunk so low, that it was necessary something should be done. I was resolved not to return to my father's, though I knew by the advertisements that I should be welcomed ; and I went down some miles into Essex, and stole a horse. I was not cautious enough, and was taken, and committed for trial—in these circumstances, having no money, and my mind not being made up to cross the water, I wrote to Mary from the gaol—the rest you know. I went home, but

neither the tears nor the prayers of my father or sister, produced any feelings of sorrow in me ; I was perfectly unmoved—my heart was as hard as Pharaoh's. After a short time, during which I kept up a correspondence with Fanny, I absconded a second time, having first robbed my father and Mary. I joined Davis and his sister ; and as I brought but little money, for which they both abused me, I soon had recourse to evil practices, and became a regular house-breaker, and we committed many robberies in London and its neighbourhood with impunity. My associates generally were Davis and a man named Jones, one of the most cool, deliberate ruffians I have ever known. Davis, who usually planned our robberies, and whose information was almost always correct, had ascertained, that a family of the name of Morris was out of town for a few days, and that their house, which was at Pimlico, was inhabited by two of the servants, who were left in charge of it, a middle aged woman and a groom. With the man Davis had scraped acquaintance, and he undertook to

make him intoxicated in the evening, to such a degree, that he should be incapable of making any resistance to us. This was done, and Jones, Davis, and myself, succeeded in getting into the house soon after midnight. The man, who was in a stupid sleep, we secured ; and the woman, half dead with terror, at seeing us in her bedroom, was desired in a brutal manner by Jones to show us where the plate was kept. She protested her ignorance of any being in the house, and her belief that it had been removed a week before. We ransacked the house from top to bottom, without finding the booty we expected, and which Davis was confident was on the premises."

He here stopped involuntarily, as it seemed ; a shudder passed over him, as he lay half reclined on the bed ; his face became almost spectral. I pressed him, as I had done before, to defer concluding his narrative ; in a low tone he asked me to pour out some medicine for him, and as he held out his hand to take it, I was struck with its unearthly whiteness, and talon-

like appearance ; after swallowing his medicine, and wiping his clammy brow, he resumed :—

“ It is the remembrance of that dreadful night of murder, which overcomes me, sir ; and though I soon afterwards ceased to think about it, yet, now that my last hour approaches, the scene rises before me as fresh as if it had happened only yesterday. Davis’s information was not correct ; the family was gone out of town, but for several weeks, instead of a few days ; and they had either taken their plate with them, or it was lodged in some place of security.

“ After our fruitless search, we returned to the poor trembling woman, whom we had gagged and secured. Jones, furious with disappointment, and muttering bitter curses, struck her on the head with an iron crow ; she fell immediately, without a groan—her scull was fractured. Davis then proposed to do for the man, and the other villain was ready ; but I swore it should not be, and they reluctantly followed me out of the house, cursing me for my interference. Jones separated from us immediately ; he knew

better than to trust himself with Davis, one hour after what had taken place. Large rewards were offered, and a pretty accurate description was given of Davis, as the man who had made the groom drunk, and a diligent search was made for him ; his sister had some time before been kept out of the way, and no clue was ever found to lead to our detection. We skulked in various parts of the country for a very long time, and Jones, I believe, succeeded in getting out of the country. From that time, Davis always had a dread and hatred of me, for having prevented the murder of the groom, and thereby made his chance of detection more probable ; but he concealed his hatred as well as he could, though it would now and then break out in abuse."

He now seemed so much exhausted, that I insisted upon his discontinuing his story till the following day, or at least till the evening ; this he consented to do, and after promising to see him again in the course of the day, I left him.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

“ Now once again the gloomy scene explore,  
Less gloomy now—the bitter hour is o’er.”

CRABBE.

IN the evening I again saw him. He seemed somewhat refreshed by the little sleep he had had ; but a hectic colour was on his cheek, and his eyes had a feverish brilliancy. He resumed his narrative :—

“ I pass over the account of our robberies in the country—we were not idle, and were fortunate in escaping detection ; but murder was not again added to our crimes. I now come to something in which you were interested. So long a time had passed since the murder of the poor woman, that we thought we might venture



nearer London ; and we accordingly took up our quarters in the neighbourhood of Hampstead. Davis went out but little in the day time, and altered his appearance as much as he could, by letting his whiskers grow ; and while in the country he had had a cut on the face, in a quarrel with a woman, and the scar very much disfigured him. One morning I met you, sir, at Highgate. I knew you instantly ; for my dangerous trade had made me quick at recognizing. You did not see me—I followed you to your house. The next day I met you again—you had only seen me as a boy, and I was now a man ; and, besides, I knew that care and intemperance had greatly altered me. I was therefore not at all afraid of your recollecting me. I planned the robbery of your house. Davis went to work—got into conversation with your boy, and learned all the particulars we wished to know,—among other things that the boy's father was ill in the country. Davis, at my instigation, persuaded the boy to ask you to

let him go to see his father for two or three days. You gave him leave, and we fixed on the next evening for the attempt. Our accomplice was a man whom we had known for some time, but only by the name of Black Will ; his real name I never knew, but he was as daring a ruffian as Jones. The appointed hour arrived, and he did not come, and we began to think it must be deferred ; however, more than an hour afterwards he came—something had detained him. After a little mutual swearing we set to work, and got into your house without much difficulty. Black Will proposed to go at once to your bed-room and secure you ; but to this I objected. We proceeded to a front parlour, and were very busy, when suddenly, in the dead silence of the night, the clock struck two. Davis was startled, and let a chisel fall from his hands. Black Will, in a loud whisper, swore at his carelessness ; and I every moment expected you would be roused. At first I thought of taking the lantern, and going up stairs to see

that all was quiet; however, I did not—but I listened in the hall for several minutes, and as I could not hear the slightest movement, supposed that all was safe. We had opened a writing-desk that stood in the room, and were rummaging its contents, when suddenly a window was thrown up in one of the upstairs rooms, and immediately we heard the report of a gun. It was now every one for himself; and in the bustle a table was thrown down, and how I escaped a broken leg I hardly know, for it grazed my shin. We pushed along through the hall, swearing at each other till we got into the garden, when another gun was fired, and Davis swore he heard the ball whistle close by his head as it passed him. This made us run at the top of our speed, till we got at the outside of the garden wall, where we separated, more irritated at being disappointed in our booty, than glad at our escape without being hurt. It was a most providential thing that you heard us, for we had resolved not to leave the house without money; and had you

been a few minutes later in giving an alarm, we should, to a certainty, have broken into your room, for we did not find anything in the shape of money in the writing-desk ; and Black Will was such a desperately hardened character, and Davis had been in such a diabolical temper all the evening, that you would have suffered from their brutal violence, even if your life had not been sacrificed ; nor would my remonstrances have prevailed upon them, for Davis had never forgiven my former interference ; while resistance, on your part, would have been followed by certain death. I thank God I was saved from that crime : it was to beg your forgiveness for the attempt which might have been so fatal to you, that I was so anxious to see you before I died."

He shed tears, and was deeply affected. With feelings of sincere commiseration, I assured him of my entire and utter forgiveness ; and as his long, thin, white fingers, squeezed my hand, his hollow humid eyes beamed with thankfulness.

After a pause of some minutes, he went on :—

“ After this I continued the same course of life, robbing sometimes with Davis and sometimes without him, till we came to this neighbourhood a few weeks since. We got information which induced us to break into a house in this town, where we succeeded in getting a considerable booty. A few days afterwards Fanny and I quarrelled, a thing by no means uncommon, as my temper was naturally violent, and hers was much the same. She made use of very gross language, which irritated me to such a degree, that, for the first time in my life, I struck her. Her face became white with rage, but she said not a word; however, she took effectual means of being revenged; for in concert with her brother, who retained the old grudge against me, she contrived to give such information as led to my apprehension and conviction, while Davis was not to be found, and we had no accomplice in this business. I had for two years

been in an ill state of health ; anxiety and vice had impaired my constitution so much, that she was well aware I could not live long. At first I was furious that this woman, who had first seduced me into crime, should at last betray me ; but it was all for good. Since I have been here, my thoughts have often dwelt upon the events of my life, and I can hardly believe I could have been so infatuated as to persevere in such a life after the risks I had run of being taken ; but so it was. I believe the very danger had charms for me ; and such is the force of habit, that I continued to live with this woman, though I had been aware, almost from the beginning of our connexion, that she had been a girl of the town before she came to my father's. Of my father's death I did not hear till long after it took place, as we were then at a considerable distance from London, on account of the poor woman's murder. It gave me some unpleasant feelings at first, but I drowned them in drinking ; and I fear nothing less than the situation in which I am now placed

would have turned my thoughts in the right channel. For such was the natural hardness of my heart, that I never recollect shedding a tear, on any occasion in my life, till I came here ; but since I have been in prison, the chaplain, whose voice is so like what my father's was that I sometimes think I hear him, has been most kind and constant in his attention to me ; and his exhortations have opened my eyes to the enormity of my guilt ; and I grieve every hour of the day for my unnatural conduct to my father, who was always indulgent, and to my sister, who loved me with a sister's fondness. May God, in his mercy, forgive me for the ingratitude and wickedness of which I have been guilty." As he concluded, he clasped his hands fervently together, and turned his eyes upwards in silent prayer.

At his request I then related the particulars already detailed, the declining health and death of his father, and his forgiveness of him ; but he was so deeply moved, that I was compelled to soften and abridge my story ; for in his sinking

state I feared it would be too much for him. "And did he forgive me, sir?" he said. "Oh! wretch that I was to break his heart." He wept like a child. "My sisters, too, my kind Mary. I seem only now to know what I have lost. Oh! that I could recal the past. I had a life of honour and happiness before me—I chose a life of crime and misery." After a pause, he said, "And now, sir, will you add to your kindness, by promising that you will not leave Hereford till I am gone? It will only be a few hours." I promised—and conversed with him a few minutes longer, till he became tranquil, and seemed disposed to sleep. For two days he continued sinking, but free from pain. I sat with him a considerable portion of the time: his thoughts were bent onwards, beyond that untimely grave which was opening to receive him. Every religious consolation, adapted to his melancholy situation, was administered by the venerable white-haired chaplain; and in that voice whose tone did (for it was not imagination) strongly resemble that one he had so often heard in childhood.



On the morning of the third day he was fast sinking, and there was a greater degree of solemnity in his countenance and manner. In a low distinct voice, he said, "I have seen my father, it was no dream—he called me; it was in the grey light of the morning, and I had been awake some time—he stood at the side of my bed—he smiled upon me, and called me by my name, but I could not speak. I shall go to him—blessed be God." His pallid face was illumined with a smile of hope: he continued praying and dozing at short intervals, and now and then apostrophising his father, till the afternoon, when he awoke for the last time on earth. I was standing on one side of the bed; he looked at me, and weakly pressed my hand: the chaplain knelt on the other side, and began to pray; and at the moment a beam of sunshine glanced through the grated window, and fell on his silvered patriarchal head. I looked at the dying youth: his eyes were closed, but his lips moved. I stooped—prayer was upon them, as with a faint struggle his soul passed from him.

As I looked at his features, which seemed to me more like his eldest sister's than they were before, and as I remembered that the corpse of a convicted felon lay before me, I again thought that it was Heaven's mercy which had called the father before the son. "Few and evil" were his days; yet there was consolation in the reflection, that instead of being cut off abruptly in his career, as he might have been, he lived to be sensible of, and to deplore, his criminal conduct; and that if he died in a gaol, and without one of his family to close his eyes, yet that devotion and repentance soothed and spoke peace in his dying hours; for himself individually, and for his sisters, I could not regard it in any other light than as a happy and satisfactory termination to an ill-spent life.

I had left the gaol, and had got into the street, when all at once the church bells struck up a merry noisy peal, and I saw the street thronged with people. There had been an election for some parish officer or other, and the successful

party was in high glee ; and music was being played under the very walls of the gaol. Death, after all, and in any circumstances, is still death ; and although from their conversation and conduct it certainly does seem as if

“ All men think all men mortal but themselves ;”

yet even the most worldly or careless cannot, I think, witness the struggle between life and death, or look upon the corpse from which life has just departed, without a feeling, a humiliating reflection, that

“ To this complexion they must come at last.”

And it was so with me ; I felt grief in hardly any degree at what I had witnessed ; but the transition from the gloom and stillness of the chamber of death to the glare and merriment without, was too abrupt to be otherwise than discordant to my feelings. I immediately wrote to Mr. Templeton, apprizing him of all that had happened ; (I had promised the poor youth I would

do so ;) he came down to me, and we followed and saw consigned to the grave all that remained of the misguided and ill-fated John Hunter. His death was communicated to his sisters ; but other cares and other affections now intervened to withdraw their thoughts from dwelling long upon his melancholy fate. Mrs. Fortescue had lost her afflicted child, but she had still two pets ; and Mary had not long since presented her husband with another boy.

“ Some natural tears they dropt, but wiped them soon,”

for there was comfort in knowing that he died repentant ; and Mary’s gentle heart overflowed with grateful kindness to me, as having, by my presence, contributed, in some measure, to alleviate the bitterness of dying among strangers, and in a gaol.

## CHAPTER XXV.

“ Are not thy transgressions great and numberless ?  
Do they not cover thee like rising floods,  
And press thee like a weight of waters down ? ”

Rowe.

ABOUT twelvemonths after my final interview with Margaret, I received information, which was interesting to me in the highest degree ; and as I obtained it from more than one source, and at intervals, I shall put it in a succinct and regular form.

Mr. Thompson was attacked by a dangerous fever after I left R——, which assumed so alarming an appearance that he was given over ; it, however, took a favourable turn, and after a confinement of many weeks to his bed, during

which he was attended by his wife with anxious solicitude, he recovered. By the event it would seem that the brandished dart of death had alarmed his conscience; for immediately after his recovery he wrote to Margaret, enclosing money, but at the same time disclaiming all intention of renewing his intimacy with her. The firmness of his resolution was never put to the test; for about the same time a youth (and from the description, I have no doubt he was the juvenile champion I had encountered) was detected in a course of embezzlement, which he had long pursued. Infatuated by his passion for Margaret, he had adopted this plan of gratifying her vanity and extravagance: his master, a wealthy tradesman, but in whom wealth had not dried up the milk of human kindness, was averse from prosecuting; and the boy's father, who was living, in the evening of life, on the little property which years of honest industry and frugality had produced, was only too happy to save his only child from condign punishment, by

parting with almost all he had. The matter was arranged, and the boy sent to sea, and poverty waited upon old age.

Margaret's reputation was in sufficiently "bad odour" before, and this circumstance, which soon become known at R——, gave it the "coup de grace;" and she found it expedient to remove expeditiously and privately. Her next abode was at L——, a village on the sea coast, about fifty miles from R——; and here she had been only a few days, when one evening, walking on the beach, she heard approaching footsteps, and turning abruptly round, saw——her brother. Her agitation was excessive; she trembled, and would have fallen. He was affected, and held her till her agitation subsided, and till a copious flood of tears, the first she had shed for many years, relieved her, and proved that the heart, so long obdurate, was at last touched; that those better feelings, which had been dormant so long that they appeared not to exist, were at last awakened and called into life. She wrote to me,

giving an account of this meeting. Her letter was very long, and written at intervals, and under feelings of extreme depression; it breathed throughout a spirit almost despairing; it told of a heart broken with an abject sense of humiliation.—

“ My spirits sink to that degree, that I can hardly bear existence—I loathe myself—I must have been—surely—I must have been in a state of mental delusion. Alas! I gloried in conscious and shameless infamy—you raised me from it. Still, still, I sunk in deeper crime—can there be mercy for me?—I have had an illness—I have been light-headed for some days—this dear Charles, brother I dare not call him—a polluted thing like me, to call him brother—has been most kind—his wife, too—good—angelic woman—his little boy comes to me.—My paper is blotted, but I cannot help it—they will gush from my eyes, when I think of my—of Charles—may he be rewarded—I pray for them—pray, do I say? a wretched thing like me—prayer is not for me!



“ Charles has given me my mother’s bible—there is her favourite prayer in it, written in her own handwriting—I try to read it, but tears blind me every time I open the book.—I strive to pray—to look forward, but my mind shrinks with apprehension. Edward Douglas, do you think I can ever be forgiven ?

“ Revenge, too, I must be revenged on Mr. Fortescue !—I, a scorn, an outcast—and I tormented him with abusive and wicked anonymous letters, even after I came to R——, wretch that I am.”

From other parts of her letter I learned that Charles was much thinner in person, and had lost his volatile spirits; and their meeting, although apparently so singular, was very naturally explained. When Charles and his sister were about ten or eleven years old, they accompanied their mother on a visit to her aunt, an old lady of the name of Macdonald, who resided in a very pretty cottage at R——, and they were there some weeks. I well remembered

the delight with which the children always spoke of this visit. Mrs. Macdonald, although too infirm to move much about, seemed to have possessed the faculty of attaching children to her ; for they always spoke of her with fondness, only second to that which they felt for their mother ; and their grief for her death, which happened two or three years afterwards, was in proportion. Her property, which was not much, reverted to her husband's family.

When I proposed to Margaret to quit London, the first place that occurred to her was R——. So often does memory cling tenaciously, even in the most degraded circumstances of life, to scenes connected with the innocent enjoyments of childhood. While living at R——, she had frequently heard the village of L—— praised for its romantic beauty, as well as the salubrity of the air ; indeed it had often been the theme of Mrs. Macdonald's commendation in bygone days ; and accordingly, when compelled, by the odium she had incurred, to leave R——, she repaired to L——.

Charles, after having passed some time in London, restless and unhappy, undetermined what to do, or where to go, at last, impelled by recollections similar to those which actuated his sister, also repaired to R——. It was here that he became acquainted with an amiable girl, a few years younger than himself; and the acquaintance terminated in marriage. The health of his wife being delicate, sea bathing was prescribed to her, and they went to L——, with the intention of remaining only a few weeks. The air, however, and the bathing, proved so beneficial to her, and Charles was so captivated with the place, that they protracted their stay considerably beyond the period they had originally intended. In the meantime, in consequence of the death of its proprietor, an estate at L—— was put up for sale. Charles became the purchaser, and they had resided there ever since, and it seemed, from Margaret's account, in the possession of every sublunary felicity.

“ I look back with horror on my life. Was it possible that I——it is more like a shocking

dream than a reality. I feel so humbled in the presence of my brother's wife—my depression is dreadful; yet she is the gentlest, kindest of beings. My mind is calmer—I have wept almost incessantly. Charles has given me a small portrait of my mother—you remember it, the one that was most like her—it hung in her own room. Ah! how distinctly I remember that happy home—these beloved features make my eyes fill with tears, as I think upon her fondness.

“ I have prayed—yes, I have prayed—my mother's prayer, too—my spirits are very low, but composed; they tell me He will have mercy—He will abundantly pardon. I walk on the beach at sunset, the only hour of the day at which I come out. The beautiful solitude, whose stillness is only broken by the gentle dashing of the waves, calms and soothes my mind. Can it be possible that such a degraded wretch as myself is permitted to enjoy such heavenly tranquillity? Great, good, merciful Almighty!”

The remainder of her letter was written in a firmer hand, and apparently after a long interval.

“ I write to you, because I am sensible that it will give you consolation to know that I abhor my past crimes, that I am sincerely penitent, and that my mind is tranquil. Comfort, yes, even comfort is mine. I live in seclusion, which is only interrupted by my kind brother, who will see me, and his family. His little cherub is often my companion. My time is passed in reading the Book, in prayer, and in an occasional walk in the evening, to look at the beautiful sun sinking to rest—solemnly, peacefully. )

“ These will be the last lines you will receive from me—this will be the last time you will hear of me. By the love of our childhood, in which there was no crime, I beseech you to remember the Magdalen in your prayers. Edward Douglas, pray for me. May you be happy now, and eternally—farewell !”

It was affecting to see her abject humility, her prostration of spirit, under the awakened consciousness of guilt ; but it was balm to my heart, to think that, in all human probability, her days would glide to a peaceful end in repent-

ance and tranquillity. She spoke of her brother and his wife in other parts of her letter, but always in the same terms. Charles appeared to be completely metamorphosed, from the careless, lively, jovial bachelor, to the considerate, thoughtful, affectionate husband; while his soothing attention to Margaret showed the warm love of the brother equally with the mild benevolence of the Christian. Under other circumstances, how I should have rejoiced to clasp the hand of this once loved companion of my boyhood, whom I now esteemed more highly than ever. Alas! not the least painful consequence that guilt entails upon us, is the loss of our friends.

I made enquiry at R—— after the poor old man who had made a beggar of himself to save his son, and I sent him a small remittance; but I was pleased to learn that he had already received money from Charles; and what was better still, that his son had returned from a short voyage, and bade fair to be the prop and solace of his declining years.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

“ He that with injury is grieved,  
And goes to law to be relieved,  
Is sillier than a sottish chouse,  
Who, when a thief has robbed his house,  
Applies himself to cunning men,  
To help him to his goods agen ;  
When all he can expect to gain,  
Is but to squander more in vain.”

HUDIBRAS.

I CONFESS that I write without method or arrangement, and that the style of my writing, as compared with numerous productions of the parturient press, is not above mediocrity. Perhaps I have not made as much of my materials as I ought to have done—on the other hand, I have endeavoured to avoid prolixity and tedious-

ness ; and if I have not described “ faultless monsters,” or extraordinary incidents, neither have I pretended to, or aimed at anything beyond a simple detail of those events in which I was unfortunately interested ; in short, a “ round unvarnished tale,” interspersed with such reflections as seemed to me to grow naturally out of the subject.

I might have said a great deal more about my honest friend Jackson. I might have drawn his picture at the head of his table, with his comely jolly dame (herself a gem), and his half-a-dozen saucy, rosy-cheeked, curly-pated urchins, imps of rude health, ruder spirits, most rude mischief ; with a host of retainers, in the shape of cousins, servant-wenches, and farming-men,—a well-fed clan, of which he was the feudal chief. The dogs, too—I had almost forgotten them, which he never did—there they were, of all sizes, some indoors, some out, from the little tiny spaniel Flora, the pet of the youngest chub Polly, to the magnificent Hector, the largest Newfoundland dog I have seen—every degree



of sporting dogs included. There he sat, an absolute monarch, whose will was law, and whom the whole clan feared as much as they feared the little spaniel—he did not rule by fear. I regret now that I have not given a more particular account of the sturdy yeoman ; I wish I had put his red waistcoat and redder face in the frontispiece ; but it is too late—I cannot get it—he has left off swearing, and is gone to a better world. Yes, he is dead ; and old men and young men cried over his grave like girls, for they loved him ; and the dogs and the beggars whined, for his hand had fed them.

I have hitherto made no mention of a circumstance which, among other consequences, included the writing of these memoirs ; and which an experienced story writer would have set out with, instead of leaving it to this time of day ; and that is the reason I began this chapter with the deprecating confession of my want of method, and inexperience—anticipating and staving off censure, by admitting the fault ; but something or other brought the good old farmer

•

into my mind, (I believe I loved him almost as well as any of the clan, although I had not seen him for a long time,) and I could not resist speaking of him for the last time.

A cousin of my father's, of the name of Cameron, lived in a distant part of Wales; he had been educated as a surgeon, and had been in practice many years ago; but whether he was disgusted with the profession from some unknown cause, or whether he felt satisfied with the little money he had got, having vowed a vow against committing matrimony, with all its spendthrift consequences, so wickedly ruinous in the eyes of the saving man, this history does not say,—I speak only of what I know—(I wish all my friends would do the same). Well, then, he was a bachelor, considerably older than my father, who was his only relation; they had not met for some years, but a regular correspondence subsisted between them, for, as my father used to say, "I may never live to benefit by Cameron's death; but you, Edward, may, and most probably will."

These letters tickled my fancy amazingly,—

only a few hundreds in legacies, the residue amounted to nine or ten thousand pounds.

So far all was smooth, but now came the rub; another will was produced, purporting to be executed by the "one-cornered humourist," only a month before his death, in which I was not even named, his entire property being bequeathed to a woman (he hated women) who had lived with him for some years as housekeeper, (as something else, report said, but I don't trust to "on dits") and to whom in the former will (my will if I could have my way) he had left the sum of one thousand pounds. This woman was low and artful, and she had a brother who possessed the same qualifications, but in a far greater degree; he was a pettifogging attorney, a crawling, creeping, cringing reptile; sleek, silky, and smooth in speech and manner, "milk-faced and tiger-hearted"—(where have I seen these words?) whose unsqueamish conscience could (like Esquimaux stomachs) digest every thing; to whom

"Oaths were words, and words were wind."

He had been concerned in many dirty-complexioned jobs, but his well varnished impudence and plausible cunning had brought him through; however, the honourable members of the profession regarded him with dislike and suspicion. This man derived no personal benefit from the will; and the only apparent interest he exhibited arose from the fraternal regard so amiable a disposition must be supposed to entertain for his sister. The will was not drawn up by him, (he was too cunning for that,) but by another attorney, a man upon whom Providence had bountifully bestowed twelve children, as well as the rather superfluous incumbrance of poverty. His practice (I mean his legal practice) was not productive, at least in comparison with the "fruitful vine" his wife, who bore him sons and daughters with exuberant and unalloyed fertility. En passant, I often have remarked that these large families, unlike Glendower's spirits, "will come when you *do-n't* call for them;" that is to say, when poverty comes in at the door, children fly in at the window—or somewhere else; and I

have long arrived at the conviction that poverty, unfeeling she-wolf as she is—"dura mater,"—often wantonly increases her natural ugliness, (which has already frightened thousands into despair and despondency, and lingering disease) by the inconsistent and wicked encouragement she gives (some devilish drug, no doubt) to the female propensity for being "in the straw." Whatever may be the cause, one thing is certain—wherever poverty stalks through the land, children bear her train, and tread upon her heels in quick succession; and this retinue seems likely to follow her, till such time as that blind old foolish heathen Plutus, shall be compelled by universal execration to take her for better and for worse, and to make an honest woman of her, "a consummation devoutly to be wished;" or, until she shall be banished from the face of the earth, like a criminal as she is, with hunger, nakedness, and the rest of her desperate gang, to some of the penal settlements in that lower world, not named to ears polite, where she shall receive the punishment due to her, for the

misery her ugly physiognomy and her intruding impudence have inflicted upon the inhabitants of this terraqueous globe.

This digression is not much, after all, out of the way; and making allowance for the temptation to wander, it is nothing at all; for it is a subject upon which I could have been eloquent (or tedious) for several pages.

I am far from insinuating that this attorney, I mean the man with the plurality of children, was equal in dishonesty to the other—he was but the tool of the master workman, and I really believe, that it was poverty only that made him so ready an instrument to his hands. He produced a copy of instructions for the will, purporting to be in Mr. Cameron's handwriting, and which he swore he had received from Mr. Cameron himself, who was perfectly rational and sensible at the time. The other limb of the law deposed, that he had seen Mr. Cameron almost every day for some time, till within three or four days of his death; that he always appeared to him as capable of making a will as he him-

self was, and that soon after the execution of the will, Mr. Cameron, in conversation with him said, that he had no relations, and that he had left all that he had to Winny Evans, in recompense of her services. The third on the list of *dramatis personæ*, was a herb doctor, who had attended in the capacity of medical adviser ; and who stated, that at the request of the deceased, he had been witness to his signature, and that the will was read over to Mr. Cameron, and understood by him—that he (deceased) was eccentric in some of his opinions, but that he was a man of strong mind, and capable of managing his own affairs ; that he also had a mortal antipathy to the members of the medical profession, not one of whom had ever been in the house, till he (this culler of simples) was sent for by Mrs. Winifred ; and after great difficulty, Mr. Cameron was prevailed upon to see him. That the deceased made use of abusive language to him at the first interview, but not afterwards—that his death was caused by natural

decay, and not by disease ; but that he possessed his mental faculties till the very last.

A fourth witness, a barber in the town, was merely the echo, as far as his understanding went (which was no great distance), of what the others asserted ; he also witnessed the signature to the will.

From what I have said, it will be apparent that we were at law on this momentous subject. I was so thoroughly persuaded that collusion had been practised, and there were such suspicious circumstances connected with the transaction, that acting by the advice of counsel, to whom I submitted the case, I was determined to do all in my power to defeat their machinations.

The individual in whose custody the original will was placed, deposed, that Mr. Cameron was singularly reserved and silent on the subject of his property—that he firmly believed no one but himself was aware of the existence of such a will—that he had called five or six times in the course of three months, previous to Mr. Cameron's death, but could never see him, the



answer being, that he was engaged, and could not be spoken with—or, that he was unwell, and did not choose to be disturbed—and in fact, he had not seen him for more than three months—he did not think the copy of instructions was in Mr. Cameron's handwriting; but would not swear it was not, as illness might have made a difference, for different it certainly was.

I had two other witnesses, who deposed to the effect that he had not been seen out of his house for some months, and that they had called and received the same answers as in the former instance; and they also believed the instructions for the will were not in his handwriting, which they had often had opportunities of seeing. To say the least, the refusal to admit any one to see him was suspicious; and it was extraordinary, if there was no disease, that medicine should have been administered; and by Esculapius' own showing, some vile decoction had been swallowed by Mr. Cameron, when almost dying. To this it was answered, that he would not go

out of the house for some months previously to his death, although they attempted to persuade him to do so ; neither would he be seen by any one, on which point he was most peremptory—seemingly resolved to live in entire seclusion. With respect to the medicine, it was alleged, that during his illness, he was incessantly calling for something or other, till the very last ; that what was given, was simple in quality, and little in quantity, and was administered in preference to irritating him by refusal.

After much learned argumentation in the Prerogative Court, the decision was unfavourable to me ; but as I thought (and still think) there was forgery and perjury in the business, I resolved in carrying it into the Court of Chancery : this was perhaps an act of foolish obstinacy, but I could not endure the thought of being beaten by this precious confederacy. After some delay, a day was fixed for the hearing ; and to my extreme vexation, the previous decision was confirmed, and I was condemned to pay the costs, which were very considerable. Irritated

at their successful knavery, I refused to obey the orders of the court, and was consequently committed to the Fleet Prison for contempt. This was the sequel to Mr. Cameron's will.

It was after I had been here a few days, that I determined to write these memoirs (autobiography I believe is the modern word); I knew I was not likely to be disturbed by visits from my relations, for the best of all possible reasons, for as respected the ties of consanguinity, the world was a blank to me ; and with the exception of Mr. Templeton, [who often came, I had reason to suppose that the visits of my friends would be "few and far between."

Among the inmates of this place, I have unexpectedly met with a person whom I knew eight years since—Mr. Phillips, whom I have mentioned before, as an admirer of Miss Hunter ; although a consummate coxcomb, he had been well educated, and at that time was in possession of a handsome fortune. The advantages which education has given him, he retains, even in the purlieus of a prison ; but of the

latter far more useful acquirement, he has long since disembarassed himself in some South American mining speculations.

How strange are the transformations one witnesses in life ! Phillips has now lost all his coxcombry—it seems to have made itself wings like his fortune, and he is the most slovenly, careless, thoughtless fellow imaginable—he has found a solace for disappointment, in drinking—and without much difficulty one might suppose, that he was afflicted with some disease analogous to hydrophobia (mitigated, it is true,) for he has an extreme antipathy to water ; but to water alone. To other liquids, his aversion diminishes in proportion as they possess the quality of strength in a greater or lesser degree ; and when the cold aqueous element is freely corrected by spirits, his repugnance to swallow the beverage is so slight, as to be scarcely discernible ; while his supreme delight is in an intimate intercourse with those pure, ardent, and familiar spirits, who are always at our elbow with their liquid fire, to warm our hearts, to soothe our woes, and to ele-

vate our ideas above this selfish, sordid, ill-natured, dissatisfied, spiteful world. Phillips drinks from morning till night, and sometimes from night till morning, but yet he is seldom intoxicated ; and most strange it is, that with all this, and in spite of his slovenly appearance, he still possesses something of the manner of the gentleman, and his conversation is entirely free from the obscenity, the coarseness, and the vulgarity so often concomitant with sottishness. What strange transformations !—but I believe I said so before.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

“ Can such things be,  
And overcome us like a summer cloud,  
Without our special wonder ?”

MACBETH.

MY spirit is fearfully changed—my feelings are oppressed with awe and mournfulness. I look back with aversion at the flippant nonsense (for such it now seems) of the last chapter ; but when I wrote it my spirits were raised. The meeting of Margaret and her brother, her repentance and his kindness, had filled my mind with joy, which my imprisonment even (at least after a few days) did not materially diminish ; for although at first mortified at the result of the

lawsuit, yet, I believe obstinacy supplied the place (as it often does) of some better principle, and imprisonment lost much of its irksomeness.

The occurrence I am about to relate has made so deep an impression, that neither change of scene nor length of time will ever efface it from my mind, and my blood flows cold even at the recollection.

One evening in July, I had been conversing with Mr. Elton, an intelligent man, who had not been long in prison. I returned to my own room, which was in the upper gallery, soon after ten o'clock. My fire was nearly out. The day had been sultry, but the night was transcendently beautiful: the moon was near the full, and poured a stream of silver light into the room. I walked to the window to enjoy the delicious coolness of the air, which found its way even over the high and dingy walls by which the prison was surrounded. I stood for some time contemplating the placid queen of night, and the calm beauty of the heavens. My thoughts

reverted to the subject upon which we had been talking, and I threw myself on a chair, musing on the instability of human affairs.

Mr. Elton had an only daughter, who was married. He was security for her husband to his employers for a considerable amount ; but as he had known him for several years previous to the marriage of his daughter, he was fully convinced of his integrity ; his salary was large, for his abilities made him valuable to his employers. He suddenly absconded, without giving his wife even the slightest intimation of it. Defalcations to a great extent were discovered, and his employers came upon his security. Poor Elton offered to pay them by instalments, and represented to them that his inevitable ruin would be the consequence, if they exacted immediate payment of the bond. They were inexorable, as rich men often are ; everything was given up, his business could not be carried on, and he was ruined. The daughter, an interesting creature, who must have been beautiful before sorrow fell



upon her, came every day, with two infant children, to see her father, and to put his room in order. Poor girl! a struggling life was before her, embittered by the reflection that he who ought to have loved and cherished her, was a vagabond, who had brought her father to a gaol, and left herself and her little ones exposed to the bleak and cutting winds of adversity. Ah! these are troubles;—but there is a Power that “tempers the wind to the shorn lamb.” I sat, lost in thought, with my eyes fixed on the opposite wall of the room, when I was surprised at perceiving the moon’s light suddenly dimmed. The sky had been perfectly cloudless a few moments before, and I turned my eyes towards the window. Oh, horror!—a shadowy form stood in the room. The coldness of ice shot through me—awe stricken, I gazed. Its face was the face of Margaret; but pale, mournful, solemn. I sat powerless—I shook with terror, and cold perspiration burst from my pores—I could not withdraw my eyes, and for worlds I

could not have spoken—a dread, a solemn awe oppressed me. I know not how long it was there—it seemed to melt gradually away ; and the moon’s light was undimmed as before. I covered my face with my hands, and strove to summon up courage ; but I did not dare to raise my eyes, till the solemn bell of St. Paul’s pealed eleven, and I heard the deep voice of Bennett the watchman under the window. I then rushed into the gallery, which I paced with rapid strides, uttering incoherent ejaculations of prayer. It was long before the chilliness which pervaded my frame, forsook me ; but after a time I returned to my room, the door of which I had left open. I almost feared to see the form again. I looked—it was not there. I fell on my knees and prayed ; and when daylight showed itself, I slept.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

“ Oh ! villain—villain—smiling, damned villain ! ”

HAMLET.

SHE was dead—of that I felt assured ; and her “ erring spirit ” had appeared to me, perhaps, to warn me of my own approaching dissolution. Yes, she *is* dead—but such a death—oh, heaven !

I was unable to proceed with my story for some days—the horrid catastrophe was more than I could bear to think upon ; but I will now endeavour to bring my thoughts into coherence.

Margaret continued to lead the secluded life she had adopted from the time of meeting with her brother ; and notwithstanding his remon-

strances, she could never be prevailed upon to quit the house till evening, nor would she see any one but Charles and his family. Her health declined fast, but she refused medicine. Her spirits were low at times; but her mind was calm, and her time was almost entirely occupied in acts of private devotion. Her favourite walk was upon the beach, at a very retired part of the coast; and here she walked every evening, unless prevented by the weather. On that night—yes, *that* night! she went out as usual; and the night being so beautiful, no surprise was excited by her not returning for half an hour later than her usual time; but when ten o'clock arrived, and she did not return, the woman of the house became alarmed, and a messenger was sent to Charles, whose house was distant two miles. He came immediately, with the sorrowful impression on his mind, that in some sudden attack of extreme despondency, she had found the load of existence too heavy to be borne, and had terminated her life by suicide. Men were

procured, and a search was made in all directions that night, but ineffectually ; and Charles returned home bewildered with uncertainty.

Soon after break of day, some fishermen were passing along the beach, when the attention of one of them was attracted to something white that was lying at the bottom of the cliff, just at the mouth of a small hollow or cavern, that extended a few feet within the surface of the cliff. They went towards the object ; and as they approached, they discerned what they supposed to be a quantity of clothes huddled together. Alas ! it was the ill-fated Margaret. One of her temples was severely bruised, and there were stabs in various parts of the body. The spot where the body was discovered was a rough and rugged part of the coast : the beach was strewn with pieces of rock and cliff, and was rather difficult to be passed. It was at least half a mile beyond the extent of Margaret's usual walk ; and whether she rambled so far unconsciously, or whether the extreme fineness of the

evening induced her to lengthen her walk, must ever remain in doubt. But there was another supposition, that the murderous miscreant might have stunned her, and afterwards dragged or carried her to this spot, which, from its comparative inaccessibility, afforded him a better opportunity of effectually accomplishing his deadly purpose. All traces of struggle, if indeed there had been any, were completely effaced by the tide, which was flowing, and which, at high water, came to within a very few feet of the cave in which the body was found.

Above the spot the cliffs were high and rocky, and there was a path on the top, at the distance of a yard from the edge. Two sailors were walking home by the path between nine and ten o'clock on the night in question. They were singing, when one of them stopped suddenly, and swore he heard a faint scream from the beach. The moon shone brightly, and they approached to the edge, and looked cautiously over, but they could not discern a living

object, nor was the scream repeated. From this spot, for a considerable distance towards R——, it was as bright as day ; but, in the other direction, there was a long and wide shade for perhaps a quarter of a mile, caused by the bending of the coast, and by the towering height and angular position of the cliff. After listening a few moments, they resumed their walk without meeting any one for nearly a mile. Here the cliffs were dwindled down to an inconsiderable height ; and there was a rugged foot path leading down to the beach on one side, and on the other through a thick wood to the village of B——. When about twenty yards distant from this path, they saw a tall dark figure emerge from the beach, walking with rapid strides towards the wood ; and after they had crossed the path, on looking round, they saw the figure still walking with great rapidity, till hidden from their sight by the wood, into which he entered. Here ended all the certain information that could be obtained on the subject. Extreme excitement

prevailed in the neighbourhood, and large rewards were offered for the discovery of the perpetrator of the horrid deed. More than one suspected individual was apprehended, and afterwards discharged; but notwithstanding the greatest activity the miscreant could not be traced. It was a remarkable thing that he should not have been seen by any one lurking about the place previously, and that he should have so effectually baffled all clue, subsequently, to the murder. However, so it was; it did not appear that any one had observed him, except the two sailors; for as the individual they saw did not come forward, there could hardly be a doubt that he was the murderer, or one of them, if there were more than one—but who was he? Surmises dark and terrible floated in my brain. She had no enemy that she knew, but one, and that one she had described as a fiend in human shape; and she had irritated this fiend by repeated provocations, and revenge in the breast of such a being—yet surely even he could



## CHAPTER XXIX.

"I'll observe his looks,  
I'll tent him to the quick."

HAMLET.

THAT obstinacy, which had induced me to prefer imprisonment to liberty, no longer existed; not even a vestige of it remained after the occurrence of that solemn night; and had the whole of my fortune been required to obtain my liberation, I should not have hesitated one moment to make the sacrifice. I sent immediate instructions to my solicitor, and with as little delay as was consistent with the forms of law, I was liberated; and thus, after an incarceration of three months, I paid the penalty of my un-

not have been such a monster as to embrue his hands, in cool, deliberate murder, in the blood of a woman.

And that beautiful moon, and those heavens, resplendant with stars, at which I looked up in admiration on that awful night, were at that very moment witnesses of the foul and bloody murder ; but no—in the shadow, in the cave, in the obscurity of the rock, the assassin shrunk, as if to veil the monstrous deed from the eyes of the firmament above him.

And thou, spirit of the poor murdered Margaret, to whose life of guilt succeeded days of penitence and tears, didst thou appear to me, the companion of thy childhood, the betrayer of thy honour, to indicate the murderer whose weapon had set thy broken and contrite heart at rest so little before its time ?

## CHAPTER XXIX.

“ I’ll observe his looks,  
I’ll tent him to the quick.”

HAMLET.

THAT obstinacy, which had induced me to prefer imprisonment to liberty, no longer existed; not even a vestige of it remained after the occurrence of that solemn night; and had the whole of my fortune been required to obtain my liberation, I should not have hesitated one moment to make the sacrifice. I sent immediate instructions to my solicitor, and with as little delay as was consistent with the forms of law, I was liberated; and thus, after an incarceration of three months, I paid the penalty of my un-

successful opposition to the knavish crew ; but I thought no longer of them. A fierce, an uncontrollable desire of vengeance, an unintermitted fever, a burning passion, weighed against which every wish, and thought, and feeling, were as dust in the balance, now absorbed every faculty of my soul. I had no wish to live but for the gratification of this feeling of revenge ; and I determined to confront the wretch Fortescue, and to appal him with my knowledge of his baseness, and with my more than suspicions of his guilty concern in the last diabolical act of the tragedy ; and if he faltered or quailed before me, my course was clear. I would deliver him into the hands of justice, and blood should expiate blood.

I repaired then to Mr. Templeton, and to him I confided, in solemn confidence, the whole of the melancholy story ; beginning with my connection with Margaret, and closing with those black surmises and suspicions in regard to Fortescue, which appeared to me based on solid

grounds ; and of the justice of which I had so strong a conviction, that I became irritated and impatient, when Mr. Templeton, with his usual coolness and judgment, attempted to reason with me, and to combat my suspicions. He demonstrated the impossibility of implicating Mr. Fortescue, from the fact that he (Fortescue) had called upon him on the second day after the murder, on some trifling matter of business, and that he was in his usual health and spirits, being just returned from Boulogne, where he had been staying two months. This would, perhaps, have been convincing, at least it would have staggered previous suspicions, in the mind of a reasonable being ; but I was deaf to reason, and argument, and fact,—a powerful influence hurried me blindly onwards ; and had he seen Mr. Fortescue on the very day of the catastrophe, I believe I should rather have supposed that he had been mistaken or deceived in some unaccountable manner, than have relinquished one iota of my preconceived opinions, or hesitated one moment

in pursuing my design. Vexed at the inclination to thwart me in my undertaking—for this was the construction my irritable mood thought proper to put upon Mr. Templeton's rational and judicious dissuasions—I left him abruptly, having first procured from him Mr. Fortescue's address, to which I now betook myself. Disappointment again awaited me: he had returned to Boulogne ten days before; in fact, the day after he had called upon Mr. Templeton. Baffled as I was, my resolution did not fail. I swore a sacred oath never to desist from pursuing him, even if years of life were devoted to the pursuit, till we stood face to face, and till I was convinced that the base-hearted villain was less base than I imagined him to be, or else that he had indeed filled up the measure of his iniquity by murder.

The next day saw me at Boulogne. I hastened to the hotel at which I had been informed he was staying: he was not there—he had not been there since the month of May, when, after

a fortnight's stay, he quitted it for Paris. I cursed my sordid obstinacy, which had prevented my pursuing him sooner. The clue was lost, and that too at the moment when "confirmation strong" seemed to justify my black suspicions. I made the most minute inquiries, but could learn nothing, absolutely nothing more; and my mind was tossed in the whirl of conjecture and uncertainty. In the morning, however, a fresh impulse was given to my thoughts. I had had a dream—a strange, incoherent, incomprehensible "medley of disjointed things," of which I could remember little, but that murder, and Fortescue, and Paris, were mysteriously linked together, in some bewildering labyrinth of confusion. This was sufficient—I hailed the prognostic. My feverish eagerness blew the spark into flame, and I travelled to Paris with all the speed that gold could give; but which, to a heart ready to burst with an impatient thirst for vengeance, seemed far, far too slow.

On entering Paris, a glow of satisfaction pervaded my frame, harassed and jaded as it was by incessant anxiety and disappointment. My soul thrilled with gloomy joy, for I felt an inexplicable but firm presentiment that the time was at hand, that the seducer and the murderer were soon to meet; when the heart's blood of one, or perhaps of both, would flow in atonement for that of the ill-fated victim.

My physical strength, however, did not second the ardour of my feelings, and I was compelled to recruit it by repose. After a troubled and dreaming slumber of some hours, I awoke refreshed, and bent with increased energy upon the prosecution of that one purpose, which incessantly haunted my thoughts, to which even sleep failed to bring a respite. I made inquiries in every quarter—I perambulated the streets by day, and at night visited the Palais Royale; and every place that offered the remotest chance of meeting him. For several days all my endeavours were unsuccessful; and



I began to experience that heart-sickness which springs from "hope deferred." One morning the weather was sultry in the extreme, and distant thunder rolled at intervals, approaching gradually nearer. At noon the storm burst over our heads, and livid flashes of lightning, and loud peals of "heaven's artillery," succeeded each other with sublime but awful rapidity, while descending torrents threatened a momentary deluge. Soon the storm ceased, the black clouds passed over, the blue firmament was again visible, and the king of light and heat shone out in bright and glorious magnificence—a refreshing coolness succeeded to the sultry heat, and all nature seemed relieved from an intolerable oppression, and rejoicing at the change. I had suffered all day from lowness of spirits, in a greater degree than usual; a heavier weight depressed them—but there was a cause. This was Margaret's birth-day—a day always commemorated in her childhood by some little festival, to which we were wont to look forward

with pleasing anticipations, which were seldom much disappointed—a day afterwards consecrated in my heart by feelings of deep, and pure, and passionate attachment, mingled at times with a slight alloy of apprehension or jealousy.

“ Whose was that gentle voice, that whisp’ring sweet,  
Promised, methought, long days of bliss sincere ?  
Soothing, it stole on my deluded ear,  
Most like soft music :— ’Twas the voice of Hope.”

Now how changed the scene. She, the once lovely, once innocent, once happy Margaret, was “ festering in her shroud,” in the drear and silent darkness of the tomb.

I had given way to the train of reflections suggested by the day, and had not been out of the house. In the evening, however, I roused myself, and with feelings more softened than they had been for some days, I sallied forth. The evening was cool, and the sun was sinking in golden splendour, tinging the few clouds with the glory of his departing rays:—it was an evening whose tranquillity almost seemed to

have the power of soothing the passions of the human heart ; for as I stood contemplating the sun's disk, till it disappeared below the horizon, I felt the calm influence of the scene for a moment ; but when I arrived at the Palais Royale, I thought only of Fortescue and revenge. I entered a gambling house—the very house in which I had won poor Mr. Nevill's money on the night he committed suicide. There was a slight bustle in the room as I entered—a gentleman had fainted ; I walked towards him—it was Fortescue.

I did not utter a cry of exultation, but I with difficulty refrained from doing so. I did not even speak—I waited with savage eagerness for the opening of his eyes : he slowly recovered—he saw me, and immediately relapsed into a state of insensibility. I drew back, so that he should not see me when he again recovered—I watched him with intense anxiety. Was this the gay and handsome Fortescue ? Was it not rather his shadow ? Awfully striking was the change.

Disease or misery had “worn him to the bone ;” and the death-like paleness and thinness of his countenance were such, that I began to fear his eyes would never be unclosed ; and that the grim monarch of the tomb would rob me of my prey before I could denounce him as a murderer. At length, however, consciousness returned : he looked round with an anxious glance, as if seeking some object which yet he dreaded to see : he became better, but so extreme was his weakness, that as he was conveyed to his apartments, which were very near, he again fainted. I entered the house—a physician, under whose care he had been for some days, was sent for : he came almost immediately. I was acquainted with him, for he had attended Margaret for a short time during our sojourn at Paris—he recognized me. Fortescue showed symptoms of returning life, and was placed in bed ; and I then learned from the physician, in answer to my inquiries, that Fortescue had been in Paris only a week ; that he had travelled from England

by way of Calais ; but that in consequence of his debilitated state, he could travel only by slow and short stages, and with frequent intervals of rest. On his arrival he had immediate recourse to medical aid ; but from the first it was evident that recovery was hopeless. His constitution was broken—dissipation had done its work ; but the physician expressed his conviction that some internal anguish preyed upon him, and had undermined and shattered his frame much more effectually than even a long career of dissipation. He had not been out of his apartments till this evening, when he suddenly took the resolution of going to the Palais Royale, notwithstanding every argument was used to dissuade him, and in spite of his debility, which became more painful every hour. He had scarcely entered the gambling-house when he fainted—the rest I have described. We were talking in a low key, when a groan burst from the adjoining room—we entered. I stood by the bed side, carefully screening myself

from his view by the curtains. He again groaned—he spoke—his voice sounded hollow, scarcely human. “She comes,” he said; “her blood is on me!” I listened with greedy ears: he raved, he imprecated the most horrible curses upon himself; delirium gave him strength; and notwithstanding his previous weakness, they were compelled to put him under restraint. After the violence of frenzy subsided, he sunk from exhaustion into a state of stupor. The physician looked at me inquisitively—I signified to him that I was well acquainted with Fortescue, and intended to remain with him all night; and he departed, promising to return early in the morning. I watched through the livelong night, with extreme anxiety, for some brief interval of reason, in which the wretched man might relieve his distracted soul by a free confession of his guilt. In vain I watched: he continued to sleep and rave alternately, and his frightful curses broke the stillness of night with such appalling and startling vehemence, as shocked

even the man employed to sit up with him, accustomed as he was to scenes and sounds of madness. As to myself, the feeling of revenge was dead within my bosom—he was beyond it. I had discovered the object of my pursuit, only to find that Death had marked him for his prey, and that the torments of a guilty conscience were the avengers of blood.

In the morning the physician came, and soon after Fortescue awoke from a sleep rather longer than usual ; he was sensible—he named me—he said he had seen me, or thought he had—he was asked if he wished to see me again—he answered in the affirmative, and our eyes met at last. A spasm convulsed him for a moment ; in a voice broken and indistinct, he said, “ I am the murderer !—I went to R—— before for that purpose—you saw me—you accosted me—you did not see through my disguise ; but I was afraid to attempt it at that time.—I posted to London immediately—I called at your house, to

baffle any suspicion you might retain ; but I was far from abandoning my design. I afterwards traced her to L——. I watched her evening walks for some time, without finding the opportunity I sought—it came at last. One evening she walked further than usual ; I was concealed behind a detached portion of the cliff ; she passed by my hiding-place—I crept out—I followed her cautiously, but she heard my footsteps ; she turned and saw me, at the very instant, I struck her with violence on the head—she fell—I carried her in my arms a short distance, to a cavern in the rock, in which I had hid myself once or twice before—and there—mercy !—mercy !—save me !—she comes !”

His eyes glared on vacancy, his countenance was fixed with horror ; he was again delirious, and his reason returned no more—he raved incessantly for half an hour ; and after a fierce and frightful struggle, all was over.

He had said enough ; still I wished to know



more, much more. He had said nothing of the attacks upon Margaret while she was in London—of the provocations that had wrought his mind up to such a desperate pitch that blood only could satiate his revenge—of the manner in which he screened himself from observation so successfully, both before and after the murder. All these particulars remain, and ever will remain, involved in mystery—the perpetrator of the bloody crime was gone to his account :—

“ And how his audit stands, who knows, save heaven !  
But in our circumstance and course of thought,  
’Tis heavy with him.”

I have little more to say.—Mr. Osborne drinks and hunts as usual, and in all probability apoplexy will one day finish his career ; unless it is previously terminated by a fall from his horse. Mr. Ridley is Mr. Ridley still—advancing age has made him neither less selfish, nor hard-hearted ; for his brother died very recently,

broken-hearted, in a workhouse, somewhere in the suburbs of London. Mrs. Fortescue continues devotedly fond of her children, having refused an eligible matrimonial offer from a man whom she did not dislike, solely, as it was said, on their account. Alas! her experience of matrimonial infelicity was sufficiently bitter to deter her from forming a second engagement. Charles Wilson and his amiable wife still reside at L——; their happiness only clouded by the remembrance of Margaret's melancholy end.

Templeton and Mary are gliding through life, happy in each other, beloved by their children, and honoured by all who know them; in the enjoyment of all the happiness which even in this world is the companion of honour and virtue.

And I—shall I ever forget the past? or will memory haunt me with painful associations, till my pulse ceases to throb, and I sleep the sleep of death? I know not; but if the story of my life has

impressed upon one, only one heart, the conviction, that the indulgence of improper thoughts leads to crime, and crime o remorse and misery, I have not written in vain.

“ O Time ! thou know'st a lenient hand to lay,  
Softest on sorrow's wounds, and slowly thence  
(Lulling to sad repose the weary sense)  
The faint pang stealest unperceived away ;  
On thee I rest my only hope at last.”

THE END.

LONDON :

PRINTED BY SLATCH AND LAMPERT, GROVE PLACE, BROMPTON.



## NEW WORKS

PUBLISHED BY

MESSRS. SAUNDERS AND OTLEY.

---

### I.

MRS. JAMESON'S NEW WORK.

Now READY, in Three Volumes, Post 8vo.

#### WINTER STUDIES AND SUMMER RAMBLES.

By Mrs. JAMESON, Author of "Visits at Home and Abroad,"  
"Characteristics of Women," &c.

### II.

DR. CUMMING'S NEW WORK.

Now READY, in Two Volumes, Post 8vo.

#### NOTES OF A WANDERER IN SEARCH OF HEALTH,

THROUGH ITALY, EGYPT, GREECE, TURKEY, UP THE  
DANUBE, AND DOWN THE RHINE.

By W. F. CUMMING, M.D. &c. &c.

### III.

LADY CHATTERTON'S NEW WORK.

Now READY, in Two Volumes, Post 8vo.' 2nd Edition.

#### RAMBLES IN THE SOUTH OF IRELAND.

By LADY CHATTERTON.

With Illustrative Engravings.

### IV.

MR. ROBERTSON'S NEW WORK.

Now READY, in Three Volumes, Post Octavo, with Illus-  
trations,

#### SOLOMON SEESAW.

By the SENIOR AUTHOR OF "LETTERS ON PARAGUAY."

*New Works published by Messrs. Saunders and Otley.*

XVII.

MISS STICKNEY'S NEW WORK.

In Two Volumes, Post 8vo.

THE POETRY OF LIFE.

By Miss STICKNEY, Author of "Pictures of Private Life."

XVIII.

NEW WORK BY THE AUTHOR OF "RANDOM RECOLLECTIONS OF THE LORDS AND COMMONS."

SECOND EDITION, in Two Volumes, Post 8vo.

THE GREAT METROPOLIS.

By the Author of "Random Recollections of the Lords and Commons."

XIX.

NOW READY, in Three Volumes, Post 8vo.

JANET; OR A GLANCE AT HUMAN NATURE.

By the Author of "Misrepresentation."

---

BOOKS FOR PRESENTS.

---

I.

Each with beautifully-coloured Plates, elegantly bound in silk.

THE LANGUAGE OF FLOWERS.

SIXTH EDITION.

II.

THE BOOK OF FLOWERS.

SECOND EDITION.

III.

THE LANGUAGE OF BIRDS.







